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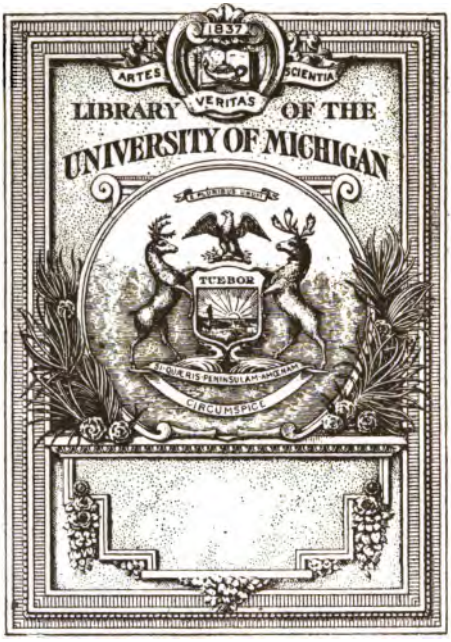
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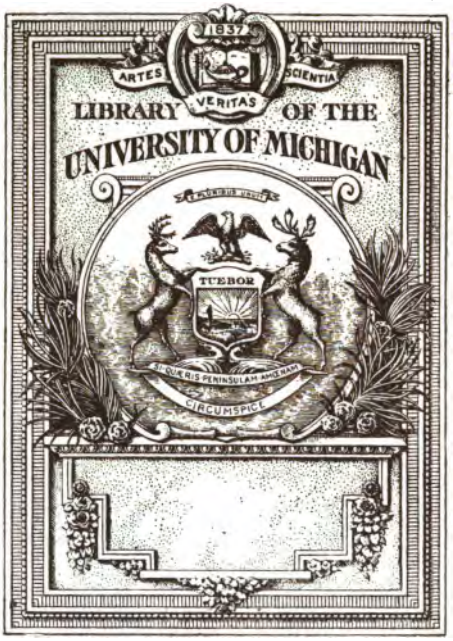
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Moloch

THE BORZOI PLAYS

I WAR
By Michael Artzibashef

II MOLOCH
By Beulah Marie Dix

III MORAL
By Ludwig Thoma

IV THE INSPECTOR-GENERAL
By Nicolay Gogol

The Borzoi Plays II

MOLOCH

A play in a Prologue, three acts and an Epilogue by

Beulah Marie Dix

New York · Alfred A Knopf · 1916

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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

05-10-1920

KLAW AND ERLANGER

IN ASSOCIATION WITH GEORGE C. TYLER

Present

HOLBROOK BLINN'S COMPANY

in

MOLOCH

A PLAY ABOUT WAR

In a Prologue, Three Acts and an Epilogue

BY BEULAH M. DIX

PEOPLE	CHARACTERS	PLAYED BY
A Man	Robert	*Holbrook Blinn*
His Wife	Katherine	*Lillian Albertson*
His Son	Roland	*Cornish Beck*
His Mother	Lydia	*Mrs. Thomas Whiffen*
His Sister	Gertrude	*Louise Rutter*
His Brother	Basil	*Creighton Hale*
His Uncle	The Professor	*T. Wigney Percyval*
His Servant	Martha	*Ruth Benson*
His Friend	Philip	*Paul Gordon*
The Woodsy Boy		*Sydney D. Carlyle*
A Girl	Frances	*Laura Iverson*
Another Girl	Margaret	*Rosina Henley*
A Little Boy	Thomas	*Richard Dupont*

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A Major		*Edwin Brandt*
An Adjutant		*Paul S. Bliss*
A Sergeant		*Jules A. Ferrar*
Another Sergeant	Fellow-	*Charles Rolfe*
A Soldier	Countrymen	*A. P. Kaye*
Another Soldier		*A. H. Ebenhack*
A Third Soldier		*John Dupont*
A Fourth Soldier		*Thomas Hill*
A Major		*Redfield Clarke*
A Lieutenant		*Gareth Hughes*
A Corporal		*Edmund Breese*
A Trooper	Foreigners	*Dale Kennedy*
Another Trooper		*Theodore C. Brown*
A Third Trooper		*Harry Dean*
A Fourth Trooper		*Vincent Phillips*

PROLOGUE—Before the War. A Country House.
Interval, Ten Days.

ACT I—Mobilization. A Town House.
Interval, Nine Months.

ACT II—Invasion. A Town House.
Interval, Seven Months.

ACT III—Battle. On the Firing Line.
Interval, Eight Months.

EPILOGUE—After the War. A Country House.
The Fruits of Victory.

Play produced by Mr. Blinn

The above, from a program of the New Amsterdam Theatre, New York, shows the cast at the first New York performance of this play, Monday evening, September 20, 1915. The play had previously been produced in Cleveland and in Chicago.

MOLOCH

MOLOCH

PROLOGUE

The country-house, once a farmhouse of the better sort, but now become the residence of the owners of the estate, is a shabby, homelike, livable place. The walls of the living-room are wainscotted in warm brown, with plaster above, and hung with sporting prints and pictures of battle. The ceiling is raftered. At the right of the audience is a big fireplace, with a trophy of arms above it. On the mantel-shelf are a brace of old-fashioned metal candlesticks, and a fair-sized loving-cup of silver. A low fire burns upon the hearth. At either side of the fireplace are doors. The one toward the back of the room leads to a coat-closet, the one toward the front to inner rooms. At the left of the audience a door leads to the kitchens, etc. At the back a two-fold outer door opens on a brick terrace, with a suggestion of garden lying below. Beyond the balustrade of the terrace you may glimpse springtide country, with fields under cultivation, fruit-trees smothered with blossoms, and, in the distance, the tower of a little church and the roofs of a peaceful hamlet. At either side of this main door are casement windows. Those at the left make of that ample corner of the room a huge bow-window, with slightly raised floor and cushioned seat. The furniture is simple, massive and good: a Jacobean settle, at right angles to the hearth, a chest beneath the windows at the right, a gate-legged table at the centre, a heavy writing table, well down at the left, with smokers' stuff, a lamp,

a work-basket, a small stand in the bow-window, with a bowl of gold-fish, and the usual complement of serviceable and comfortable chairs.

The season is May. The time is sunset.

In the bow-window, reading in the late light, with books scattered about him, and the gold-fish at his elbow, sits the Professor, a scholarly and somewhat opinionated gentleman of seventy, with a wrinkled, not altogether unkindly, face and white hair. His sister, Lydia, sixty-odd, but erect and spirited, sits on the settle, playing Patience at a little table. She wears a bit of fine lace by way of cap, but her gown of plum-color is never so little out of fashion. At the chest Katherine is arranging flowers in two low bowls, slowly and carefully, as one who loves flowers and respects them. She is perhaps thirty, of the type that, for lack of better word, we describe as Madonna, born to be a mother to everything in sight, but with her goodness spiced with a saving sense of humor. She wears a soft gray house-dress. On the floor at the left kneels Roland, a paper soldier-cap upon his head, at play with toy soldiers, ranged in ranks, and a toy gun. He is six or seven years old, the sort of little lad to make any mother proud. He speaks, as the curtain rises.

ROLAND. Bang! [*Knocks down the toy soldiers.*] See, Mummy, our men have killed all the foreigners.

KATHERINE. Why do you want to kill them, son?

ROLAND. Because they're foreigners.

KATHERINE. Roland!

LYDIA. Do let the boy alone! You wouldn't have him play with dolls.

ROLAND. I'll be the colonel, like my grandpa was. He killed the nasty foreigners, didn't he, Mummy?

KATHERINE [*setting flowers on the centre table*]. That was ever so long ago. We are at peace with all the world now. We shall always be at peace.

PROFESSOR. Have you seen the newspapers?

KATHERINE [*setting flowers on the writing table*]. Of course I haven't. Not since day before yesterday. But who cares for the stuff they print? [*Sits by the table, takes up her sewing.*] Civilized nations don't fight each other.

[*From the terrace come in quickly Gertrude and Basil, both in tramping clothes. She is in her early twenties, impulsive, passionate, and altogether charming. He is in his late teens, with the erect and masterful carriage that stamps him as a military cadet. Both carry newspapers.*]

BASIL. Hello, folks! We've got the papers.

PROFESSOR [*rising excitedly*]. Well, well, well!

BASIL [*giving him a newspaper*]. Yesterday's. Best we could do. [*Tosses his cap on the chest.*]

GERTRUDE. Clear to the Corner we had to tramp to get them. Of all the luck! To be poked into this dead and alive place, a hundred miles from everywhere, at such a time! [*Flings paper on table.*]

LYDIA. Hush! Tell me if there's any news.

[*Gertrude hangs her coat and hat in the closet.*]

BASIL. I should say there was news.

PROFESSOR [*reading paper*]. Ultimatum! Well, well!

KATHERINE [*startled, but only for a moment*]. Ultimatum!

PROFESSOR. Outrageous! Insolent!

[*Katherine resumes her sewing.*]

BASIL. They think we'll back down, just because we don't swagger about, armed to the teeth. Well, when it comes to business, we'll show them a thing or two.

PROFESSOR. Yes. When this great nation of ours is once roused —

BASIL. Why, I'd back one of our chaps with his bare fists to do up two of those foreign Johnnies with their rifles.

GERTRUDE [*coming to the hearth*]. Oh, for goodness' sake, talk sense!

PROFESSOR. I trust you do not doubt the spirit and courage of your countrymen?

GERTRUDE. No. But you're all making the mistake of doubting the spirit and courage of other people's countrymen.

LYDIA. Meaning —

GERTRUDE. The foreigners are as brave as we are.

BASIL. Oh, come now!

GERTRUDE. If it comes to war, they'll put up just as good a fight as we will.

PROFESSOR. Pshaw! [*Disgusted, he retires into the bow-window with his paper.*]

GERTRUDE. And they're in condition to fight. They have bigger guns than ours, explosives we don't even know the names of. Phil says —

BASIL. Oh, it's Phil's talk you're handing us out.

GERTRUDE [*going up to him*]. Yes, and it's sensible talk, too.

BASIL. Well, I must say that I think —

LYDIA. Children! Children!

[*Robert has meantime appeared in the outer doorway, a likable chap of thirty-odd, the best type, perhaps, of Landjunker or of country squire. He wears country clothes, and evidently has come from tramping his fields.*]

ROBERT. Hello! So the war's broke out right here, eh?

ROLAND [*running to him*]. Daddy!

BASIL. Trudie's got to quoting Phil.

GERTRUDE. And Basil is absurd. [*She retires to the window at right.*]

LYDIA. And your mother, I believe, is also absurd.

ROBERT. There, there! Of course you are not. Any mail come in?

KATHERINE. They haven't got that bridge mended yet.

BASIL. They're still sending round by the Corner, when they send at all. [*He strolls out upon the terrace, where he lights a cigarette.*]

ROBERT. Humph! Hoped I'd get word about that new cultivator. [*Goes to the smoking table and gets a pipe.*]

[*Roland returns to his toys.*]

KATHERINE. Did Phil come in with you?

ROBERT. No. He stopped at the gamekeeper's. Seems the baby is coming down with whooping cough or something.

GERTRUDE. Did you come round by the ten acre? [*Sits by table centre.*]

ROBERT. Yes. Ought to get a second crop off it this season. You know, it will play the mischief with our getting fertilizers, if the fools should rush us into war.

KATHERINE. Oh, but they won't.

ROLAND. Daddy, will you please mend my soldier?

ROBERT. Sure thing! Been in the thick of the fight, hasn't he? Get me the glue, son. [*Sits by table centre.*]

KATHERINE. Here you are, Roland. [*Gives him a tube of glue from the writing table.*]

ROLAND. Thank you! Here, Daddy.

ROBERT. Right! [*Mends soldier, while Roland leans against his knee.*] Poor old chap! Lost both legs, hasn't he? That's what your Uncle Basil is aching to do, ever since he got to be a cadet. Go out and fight somebody, anybody, and come home in fragments. [*Looking up at Basil.*] Eh, Bub?

BASIL. Great thing to sit and laugh, when your country is threatened.

ROBERT. Oh, I've lived through two big war scares in my day. Mother's lived through half a dozen.

LYDIA. And through two wars, remember.

PROFESSOR. Do you realize, Robert, that they have sent us an ultimatum?

ROBERT. Ever watch two dogs, with a fence between 'em, tearing along, barking, ready to chew each other up, till they come to an open gate and can get at each other? Then down go their tails, and home they go. That's the way it will be this time. We'll snarl at each other till it comes to the point of fighting, and then the common sense of the average citizen —

[*Roland goes back to his toys.*]

KATHERINE. That's what I keep saying. As if people could fight nowadays!

LYDIA. Nonsense! Men have always fought. They always will fight. Doesn't it say in the Bible: "I come not to bring peace, but a sword"?

KATHERINE. Yes. And doesn't it say also: "Agree with thine adversary"?

PROFESSOR [*rising, annoyed*]. My dear ladies, those old legends of Christianity are not at all pertinent. Now let me tell you —

KATHERINE. Roland! Run fetch some bread for Uncle's gold-fish. Run! [*Roland runs out at the left.*] Now I know you're going to say something barbaric.

LYDIA. Barbaric fiddlesticks! Just commonsense.

PROFESSOR. Thank you, my dear sister. As I was about to say, if you will read my compendium of international relations —

ROBERT [*rising*]. We have! [*Goes to closet and gets string with which he mends the toy.*]

PROFESSOR. You will understand that wars are the outcome of great folk movements over which individuals have no control. As a scholar and a philosopher, then, I must believe —

[*Roland runs in again.*]

ROLAND. Now may I feed the gold-fish, Uncle?

PROFESSOR. Yes, yes. As I was about to say —

Not too fast, sonny! Not too fast! There! Slowly! That way! I was about to remark that wars after all work for the good of the race.

BASIL. Nothing like war to put an edge on a nation.

PROFESSOR. And not merely are the martial virtues stimulated, but literature and learning revive and flourish.

KATHERINE. In a bloodstained soil?

PROFESSOR. So many of you dear women can see nothing in war but the pain and suffering that are merely incidental.

LYDIA. It's a sentimental viewpoint.

[*Roland in the bow-window takes up and examines one of his uncle's books.*]

PROFESSOR. Now I solemnly believe that we are on the eve of conflict.

ROBERT. The folks that talk like you are doing their best to get us into one.

BASIL. If they want a fight, let 'em have it, I say!

GERTRUDE. Oh, have a chip on your shoulder, if you must. But be sure you're ready for the people that will try to knock it off.

LYDIA. This talk about being ready is downright blasphemous.

ROBERT. Quite a strong word, Mother.

LYDIA. Our country has been victorious in every war in its history. Doesn't that prove that God is on our side? And if God is for us —

[*Robert reseats himself at the table.*]

PROFESSOR. National destiny. I, for one, believe this war is not only inevitable, but desirable.

ROLAND [*coming to his mother, with an open book*]. O Mummy! What's this horrid picture? He's eating folks alive.

KATHERINE. Let's see, son! [*Takes book.*] "They made their children pass through the fire to Moloch."

ROLAND. Who was Moloch, Mummy?

KATHERINE. He was their god, laddie. They gave him their children to devour, and they thought it was a noble thing to do.

PROFESSOR. Sun worship merely. Moloch is another name for Baal.

KATHERINE. I wonder if it's not another name for the god of war.

PROFESSOR. My dear Kate, your mythology is hopelessly confused. [*Retires again to his paper.*]

KATHERINE. Oh, I'm not talking mythology. Just sense.

GERTRUDE. It's time somebody did.

ROBERT. Steady!

KATHERINE. The god of war — the awful monster with the flaming jaws, and the nations running joyously to fling him their youngest and strongest and best.

LYDIA. Sentimental nonsense, Kate.

ROLAND. And will Moloch eat us, too, Mummy?

KATHERINE [*kissing him*]. Oh, no, no, dear! Of course not. That was ever so long ago.

ROBERT. And they were just heathen that didn't know any better. Not good sensible Christian people, like ourselves.

KATHERINE. There, dear, put the book away, and don't think any more about it.

[*Roland replaces the book on the window seat and returns to his toys.*]

BASIL. Believe I'll step down to the village and see if they've done anything about getting the mail across. [*Gets cap.*] It will be no joke for me, if my leave's been withdrawn and I've not got word.

PROFESSOR. Wait a moment, Basil! You did not find the air damp, Robert?

ROBERT. Dry as one of your lectures, sir.

PROFESSOR. Then, Basil, I'll go with you.

BASIL. I'll fetch your hat, sir. [*Goes to closet.*]

PROFESSOR. I, too, have a barbarous interest in what

is going on. [*Taking hat from Basil.*] Thanks, my boy! Can't be too careful, you know. I hate to lie awake at night coughing.

[*Basil and the Professor go out at the terrace door.*]

GERTRUDE. Uncle Charles is particular about his own comfort. [*Rises.*] More than he is about the comfort of the men he's so eager to send to do the fighting. [*Goes to the bow-window, obviously waiting and watching for some one.*]

ROBERT. Two of a kind, Uncle and Basil. And it's the kind that kicks over all our apple-carts. Here's your man, son. Good as new!

[*Roland puts away his toys.*]

LYDIA. Basil's profession was your father's profession. It would have been yours, if you had been physically fit.

ROBERT [*rising*]. Yes. That astigmatism in my left eye did me a mighty good turn, when it kept me out of the army.

LYDIA. Robert!

ROBERT [*going to her*]. Well, well, Mother, I do enough for honor and glory when I turn out once a year with a regiment of defensibles. Rest of the time I'm not keen on being an anachronism in gold braid and an air-tight helmet. [*Sits by table and takes up newspaper.*]

[*Martha comes in at the right, a middle-aged servant, kindly and commonplace.*]

MARTHA. If you please, it's Master Roland's bedtime.

ROLAND. I don't want to go to bed.

MARTHA. Come, come, Master Roland! Why, you'd ought to see my little niece Patty go when she's bid.

ROLAND. I don't want to —

KATHERINE. Roland!

ROLAND. Well, will you come hear me say my prayers, Mummy?

KATHERINE. Yes, dear. Run along now!

ROLAND. Good night, Aunt Trudie!

GERTRUDE [*kissing him*]. Good night, darling.

ROLAND. Good night, Granny. I'll take my sword into bed with me, so you needn't be scared if the enemy should come.

LYDIA. Bless the boy!

ROLAND. Good night, Daddy!

ROBERT. Good night, old man.

MARTHA. Come, Master Roland!

ROLAND. But you won't need to wash my hands, Martha. They were washed once to-day.

[*Roland and Martha go out at the right.*]

KATHERINE. Why, I didn't realize it was his bed-time. [*Folds work.*] Phil is a long time at the game-keeper's.

GERTRUDE. Rob! [*Goes to the table.*] If there should be war — what would happen to Phil?

ROBERT. Don't begin to worry. There won't be war.

LYDIA. Those foreigners will give way, when they see we're in earnest. A cowardly lot!

GERTRUDE. Phil isn't exactly what I should call a coward. Cowards don't win races in monoplanes in a high wind. [*Goes to terrace door.*]

ROBERT. Where going, Trudie?

GERTRUDE. Just across the garden.

LYDIA. It's past sunset.

GERTRUDE. I'm only going a little step.

[*Gertrude goes out.*]

LYDIA. I can't help thinking it would be in better taste just now if Philip went back to his own country.

ROBERT. He happens to have a year more of work at the laboratory.

LYDIA. Then let him go back to his old laboratory, instead of hanging round here, putting notions into my daughter's head.

KATHERINE. You know his chief ordered him to take this fortnight off. He was getting a bit seedy.

LYDIA. You'll always make excuses for him.

ROBERT. We owe him something, Mother.

LYDIA. He did no more than any physician is bound to do.

KATHERINE. Look here, Mother, you weren't here, that awful night. You didn't see Roland lying there, with his poor little face congested, fighting for every single breath, a losing fight, and we, with all our love, just helpless. And then Rob brought Phil to me.

ROBERT. We hadn't been very nice to that lot of noisy young doctors, camped down by the ford, had we, Kate?

KATHERINE [*rising*]. Why, half of them were foreigners. [*Goes to table.*] Until that night, I don't think that I'd dreamed that foreigners were quite the same as ourselves. But when Phil came in I — I just fell at his feet, as if he had been sent from God Himself, praying: "Save my only one! Oh, save my baby!"

[*Robert rises and goes to her.*]

LYDIA. That's his business, isn't it?

KATHERINE. And when the tube filled up, and we thought it was all over, Phil put his lips to the tube and drew out the poison that was suffocating our boy.

LYDIA. Other doctors have done as much.

KATHERINE [*heatedly*]. But Phil had cut his lip, remember! He took a big risk, with his eyes open, for a stranger's child — for our child!

ROBERT. There, there!

KATHERINE [*sits by table*]. Well, I shan't forget that, ever. [*Dries her eyes.*]

LYDIA [*rises, sets Patience table by the hearth*]. That's all very fine, but I hope that Gertrude won't make a fool of herself over the fellow. Get my shawl, Rob-

ert! I'll take a little step in the garden, too. [*Goes to door.*]

[*Robert gets shawl from closet.*]

KATHERINE [*rising*]. Now you know it's getting a bit damp, Mother.

LYDIA. Fiddlesticks! If Charles can venture out, I can. Always an old Betty about his precious health.

ROBERT. Here you are, Mother. [*Folds shawl about her.*] Shall I come with you?

LYDIA. I don't need help yet a while in managing my own children, thanks!

[*Lydia goes out at the terrace door.*]

ROBERT. She's got her hands full, this time.

KATHERINE. You mean —

ROBERT. I know.

KATHERINE [*going to him*]. You know that Phil and Gertrude are in love with each other?

ROBERT. He asked my permission this afternoon. Her guardian and all that sort of thing.

KATHERINE. Well, if they're only one half as happy as we've been —

ROBERT [*his arms about her*]. Rubbed along pretty well, haven't we, old girl?

KATHERINE. I don't ask for better. There! Run along after mother, do. Don't let her break in on them and spoil this minute. It won't come again.

ROBERT. I say! Do you remember the night when we first —

KATHERINE. Now don't be foolish. [*Kisses him.*] Run!

[*Robert goes out. The room is now dusky with twilight. Katherine goes to the hearth and lights the candles on the mantel-shelf. As she is busied with the second candle, Phil comes quickly from the terrace. A well built young man, headlong and sufficiently likable. He wears a Norfolk suit and a cap which he tosses upon*

the chest. At the slight noise of his entrance Katherine turns.]

KATHERINE. O Phil! I'm to congratulate you. Yes?

PHIL [*catching both her hands*]. Rob has told you, then? And I have just this minute spoke with her.

KATHERINE. Nearer the stars than ever you came in your airship, aren't you?

PHIL. The airship? Oh, I give up the flying now. I am getting down to work. To-morrow I go back to the city.

KATHERINE. But —

PHIL. Oh, yes. I am all rested. I can see straight what was all thick before. You watch me now, put it through, for her sake.

KATHERINE [*sitting on the settle*]. Your research? You never told us much about it.

PHIL. It is too big a thing almost to speak about. [*Sits by her.*] It is, I think, almost I can some day put my hand on how to cure what we are most afraid of. Living death, I mean. Death by torture. Cancer.

KATHERINE. A-ah! That was how my mother died. I watched her. O Phil! If you can do that, it's like grace sent down from Heaven.

PHIL. I don't say I can. I mean only, with time, with work — Lord! How I can work now! Funny! They used, you know, the old chaps, to bring to the women they loved heads of their enemies, men they'd killed. To-day maybe we bring to a woman so many people saved, men and women and little kiddies, perhaps. That's a pretty worth-while gift, eh?

[*Roland comes in from the right, in blue pajamas and slippers.*]

ROLAND. O Mummy! You never came to hear my prayers.

KATHERINE. You bad one! Run to bed, quick!

[*Roland lags snail-like toward the door.*]

PHIL. Oh, let him stay up for a minute, please! Come along, kiddie! [*Takes Roland on his knee.*] Well, old pal! What have you done all day?

ROLAND. I've been playing war. We killed the foreigners.

KATHERINE. Roland!

PHIL. So so! And will you kill me, too?

ROLAND [*with his arm about Phil's neck*]. You're not a foreigner. If anybody tries to kill you ever, I will take my sword —

KATHERINE. That's enough, dear. Come say your prayers.

ROLAND. I want Uncle Phil to say his prayers with me.

PHIL. I'm afraid I have forgotten how.

ROLAND. I'll show you. [*Slips from Phil's knee.*] You kneel, you know, like this. [*Kneels before Katherine.*]

KATHERINE. Phil, dear! To-night —

PHIL. It is, I think, twenty years since — [*Glances from the child to the mother, then kneels beside Roland.*] She would have loved you, my mother.

ROLAND. "Now I lay me down to sleep.
I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to keep!"
Make me kind! Keep me clean! Make me a good boy, for the dear Lord's sake. Amen!

PHIL [*half whimsically*]. Make me a good boy for her dear sake!

KATHERINE [*her hand on his shoulder*]. Amen!

MARTHA [*outside*]. Master Roland! Master Roland!

[*Phil jumps up in some embarrassment and goes to the other side of the room. Martha comes in at the right. Roland springs up and runs away from her.*]

MARTHA. Come to bed, sir! Come! [*Trying vainly to catch Roland.*] My niece Patty never acted like this.

[*Robert comes in from the terrace. Roland runs to him.*]

ROLAND. Let me stay up a minute, Daddy!

ROBERT. Well, it's a special sort of night. [*Goes to the hearth.*]

ROLAND [*running to Phil*]. I'm going to stay up! I'm going to stay up!

ROBERT [*taking down the loving-cup*]. We'll want this prize cup of Phil's, won't we, Kate?

KATHERINE. Oh, yes. And there's a bottle of the '97 left.

ROBERT. Fine! [*Crosses.*] Fill it, Martha.

MARTHA. Yes, sir.

[*Martha goes out at left with the cup.*]

ROBERT [*going to Phil*]. It's all right, old son. Trudie is with her mother. And Trudie could persuade the legs off a brass kettle.

ROLAND [*at the terrace door*]. Oh, the moon! [*Seizes Katherine's hand and draws her to the door.*] See the moon, Mummy! There, above the pear-trees. Will the rabbits come out and dance? The Woodsy Boy says they do.

KATHERINE. Hush! Who is that coming across the garden?

ROLAND. Oh, it's my Woodsy Boy!

[*Roland runs out on the terrace.*]

ROBERT. Who does he mean?

KATHERINE. A little chap that we've met in the wood, Roland and I. Roland! [*She follows the child out upon the terrace.*]

ROLAND [*outside*]. Yes, Mummy.

KATHERINE [*outside*]. You'll catch your death!

[*Roland comes into the room from the terrace, with the Woodsy Boy, a slender lad of sixteen or seventeen, shy, big-eyed, quick-motioned, like a faun. He is barefooted and bareheaded, in old brown trousers and shirt.*

In his arms he carries a little cur. Katherine follows them into the room.]

ROLAND. Come in! Don't be scared. My Uncle Phil can make him well.

WOODSY BOY. He has broken his leg, please.

ROBERT. Hello! Poor little beggar! It's your job, Phil.

KATHERINE. Roland! Don't look! [*She leads Roland to the settle, and places him upon it.*]

PHIL. You will let me take him, yes? [*Takes the dog.*] It hurts, eh?

[*Martha comes in at the left with the loving-cup.*]

MARTHA. Here's the cup, sir.

ROBERT. Put it down. We're a clinic just now.

[*Martha sets the cup on the table at centre.*]

PHIL. It's broken, all right. Lay a paper across the table, will you, Rob? [*Robert spreads a paper on the writing table.*] We'll want some warm water, Martha, and some cloths.

MARTHA. Yes, sir.

[*Martha goes out at left.*]

PHIL. If you have pencils handy, they'll make corking splints. [*Brings the dog to the writing table, where he works over him.*]

ROBERT. Hold on! I'll give you a light. [*Lights lamp on table.*]

PHIL. Steady, old sport! I'm your friend.

ROBERT. Quiet him, will you, sonny?

[*Woodsy Boy runs to the table and strokes the dog.*]

KATHERINE. What a shame that your pet is hurt!

WOODSY BOY. He isn't mine, lady. I found him. Over there by the upper lake.

KATHERINE. But that's a long distance for you to walk.

WOODSY BOY. He was in pain. So I had to bring him.

[*Martha comes in again with a basin of water and some cloths.*]

MARTHA. Here's the warm water, sir.

ROBERT. Fine! [*Sets basin on table.*] Here you are, Phil.

PHIL. We'll fix him all right now.

MARTHA. Poor creature! I'd better get him something to eat.

ROBERT. Sure thing! Kill him with indigestion. He'll die happy.

KATHERINE. Can't you find an old basket for him?

MARTHA. Oh, yes, ma'am. And I'll get him a bone, too.

[*Martha goes out at left.*]

PHIL. Hold on! We haven't rags enough.

ROBERT. Here you are! [*Tearing up his handkerchief.*] Wait a bit!

[*Basil comes in from the terrace, heatedly, and stands brushing the mud from his trousers.*]

BASIL. Well, of all the damned luck!

ROBERT. Hold your horses, Bub! What's up?

BASIL. I can't get across the beastly river. And how do I know what's waiting for me, there at the postmaster's, and forty feet of bad water, or fifteen miles of road between us?

WOODSY BOY. Do you want the mail, Mister?

BASIL. Do I want it? Rather!

WOODSY BOY. I'll get it. [*Runs to terrace door.*]

KATHERINE. Child alive! You can't get across the river. The bridge is down.

WOODSY BOY [*laughing*]. Oh, yes. But I can get across. There's a place I know, and nobody else. You wait. I'll show you.

[*The Woodsy Boy runs out.*]

PHIL. Hold the light nearer, Rob! Catch hold, Basil, please! Keep the little beggar still.

[*The three men crowd about the writing table. Gertrude runs in from the terrace.*]

GERTRUDE. O Kate! [*Goes to Katherine.*] You know, don't you?

KATHERINE [*embracing her*]. I'm so happy over it.

GERTRUDE. Mother almost forgave Phil for being a foreigner.

PHIL. Give us a splint. Get busy!

KATHERINE. Nice things, aren't they, those men of ours!

GERTRUDE. Kate! If there should be war!

KATHERINE. Why, there can't be. Men like those three, at each other's throats, food for cannon — Oh, it's madness to think of it!

[*Martha comes in from the left with a basket.*]

MARTHA. Here's the basket, sir. [*She crosses and stands by Roland.*]

BASIL. Just make him comfy. Then I'll put him out in the lean-to.

[*Basil takes the dog in the basket and goes out at left. Robert goes to the table at centre. Professor comes in from the terrace, closely followed by Lydia.*]

PROFESSOR. Dear, dear! It is long past the hour for covering the gold-fish. And you didn't remember, Kate!

KATHERINE. I'm sorry, Uncle. [*She joins him in the bow-window.*] But I'm sure they haven't caught cold. [*She helps him to cover the globe with a cloth.*]

GERTRUDE. Mother, dear!

LYDIA. I am quite resigned. [*She pauses before the settle.*] Philip! [*Phil hastily is drying his hands.*] Whenever you are at liberty —

PHIL. Dear lady! [*Goes to her.*]

LYDIA [*giving him her hand*]. You have my consent. [*Phil kisses her hand.*] No doubt I should be grateful that you asked it. [*She sits on the settle.*]

[*Basil comes in again from the left.*]

GERTRUDE [*eager to make amends for her mother's brusqueness*]. Phil dear! [*Draws near him.*]

BASIL. Oh, I say! Is that what you're driving at, you two?

KATHERINE. Where were your eyes, you bat?

PROFESSOR. Felicitations, then, are in order?

ROLAND. What is it all about?

PHIL. The biggest thing in the world, kiddie.

GERTRUDE. Uncle Phil is going to be your really uncle, not a pretend uncle.

ROLAND. Is he, Daddy?

ROBERT. Perhaps we'd better let him — if he promises to be good!

ROLAND. And he'll stay with us always? Isn't that jolly, Granny?

LYDIA. Well, I suppose it is.

GERTRUDE. O Mother, you know you're just as happy as the rest of us.

KATHERINE. And that's pretty happy.

ROBERT. Right you are! [*Takes cup.*] Here's to you, Sis! And to you, old son! All the love that's in all our hearts —

BASIL. Me, too!

ROBERT. — out of this loving-cup. Drink first, Trudie!

GERTRUDE. Thank you, Rob! [*Drinks.*] It's your turn, Phil.

[*Their hands are on the cup, when the Woodsy Boy runs in from the terrace with newspapers.*]

WOODSY BOY. Here are the papers. I couldn't read them. But the people, they all said: War!

KATHERINE. Oh, no!

ROBERT. Let me see!

BASIL. Give it here!

[*Both snatch papers from the Woodsy Boy. Basil gives a paper to the Professor. Robert sits at table, flinging open the paper.*]

PHIL. It can't be. [*Sets down the cup.*]

GERTRUDE. Phil! Oh, but you — What will become of you?

ROBERT [*from paper*]. War was declared at midnight.

LYDIA. It's come, then.

PROFESSOR. Just as I foretold.

KATHERINE. Oh, no, no! God wouldn't let it be.

BASIL [*from paper*]. They've stoned our ambassador. They've dragged our flag in the mud.

PROFESSOR. Exactly what they did thirty years ago.

LYDIA. A foreigner is always a foreigner.

PROFESSOR. Racial differences outcrop —

PHIL. Racial differences? What do you talk of? This is the twentieth century. We're past the tribal stage.

BASIL [*striking the paper with his fist*]. Your people aren't even past the caveman stage.

ROBERT [*rising*]. Go easy, Basil!

PHIL. It has come, it seems, Rob, the thing we agreed was quite impossible.

ROBERT. Old man, nothing is changed between you and me, remember. Nothing is going to change.

KATHERINE. Of course not.

GERTRUDE. It can't make any difference. We won't let it make any difference, will we, Phil? Will we?

PHIL. Between us two? No!

BASIL. You can't help yourselves. It's war now. War!

WOODSY BOY [*touching Robert's sleeve*]. Is it because of the war he must go away?

ROBERT. What do you mean?

WOODSY BOY. The men down in the village, they were saying he must go.

LYDIA. And they're right. I've lived through two wars.

GERTRUDE. Mother!

PHIL. And I was tending their children, just this afternoon.

KATHERINE. Oh, they can't mean to drive him away?

BASIL. Can't they? [*Beside himself.*] Look here! See what his people have done to our people! [*Gives paper to Robert.*] Look! Look!

ROBERT. Good God! Our women — outraged. Little children, taken out of their mothers' arms, torn to pieces.

PHIL. You believe those stories?

BASIL. We know the sort they are, the dirty brutes!

ROBERT. Go slow there!

PHIL. Am I a — dirty brute?

KATHERINE. Basil!

PHIL. Rob! Tell me! In this house, now, where do I stand?

ROBERT. You are — our guest.

KATHERINE [*going to Robert*]. Our friend, Rob. Our best friend.

GERTRUDE. Why, Rob! You don't mean —

PHIL [*with authority*]. Please, Trudie! Please! [*To Robert.*] You take them seriously, then, these lies to sell your newspapers?

BASIL. Maybe it's a lie that our country is honeycombed with your infernal spy system. Chaps that have been guests in our houses — chaps like yourself —

GERTRUDE [*to Basil*]. Oh! You dare to —

ROBERT [*to Basil*]. Be quiet! [*To Phil.*] Of course that's absurd. But your country and my country are going to fight.

KATHERINE. You said yourself —

ROBERT. That was before war was declared. And before I knew how the foreigners fight.

KATHERINE. Rob!

ROBERT. Now, right or wrong, it's my country.

LYDIA. Ah!

ROBERT. They're right, those men in the village. Better go, Phil, while there's still time.

PHIL. I understand, yes. I leave right away for town. I go and get my things together now. [*Starts toward door right.*]

GERTRUDE. You're driving him away!

PHIL. No, no, dear. It's just commonsense. In town I see you all again. This war scare blows over maybe. This is then just a good story, eh? Good night, Katherine!

KATHERINE [*giving him her hand*]. Good night, Phil!

PHIL [*to Robert*]. Good night [*shaking Robert's hand*], old enemy! [*Turns to Gertrude.*]

GERTRUDE [*clinging to him*]. You'll come back? Oh, you'll come back?

PHIL. Of course I will. [*Kisses her. Roland slips to floor and stands awaiting a farewell.*] Good-bye!

[*Phil goes out hastily at the right, ignoring the child.*]

ROLAND [*at the point of tears*]. You said he would stay with us always.

[*Gertrude buries her face in her hands, sobbing aloud.*]

LYDIA. Hush! [*Draws Roland down on settle beside her, soothing him.*]

BASIL. I've got to get the eleven o'clock train to town.

ROBERT [*seated at table, with the paper*]. War was declared at midnight.

KATHERINE. Less than twenty-four hours. Already it's cost us our best friend. Oh, what's to be the end of it all? [*Her hand on Robert's shoulder.*] What's to be the end?

[*Robert looks up at her, wondering.*]

CURTAIN

ACT I

The town-house, in its architecture and its furnishings, belongs to an older generation. The parlor, in the second story, opens at the back, up three shallow steps and through a wide arched doorway, hung with dull green curtains that are looped aside, into a writing room. The rear wall of this inner room is lined with bookshelves. A writing table and a chair fill the centre of the room. In the parlor itself are two long windows at the right, hung with curtains and formal lambrequins, and set with window boxes, full of plants in blossom, and with cushioned window-seats. Between the windows stands a tall, old-fashioned secretary, topped with a classic bust, and littered with writing things, among which are a pair of desk candlesticks and several photographs in frames. A stand with the globe of gold-fish is in the window nearer the audience and close by a rocking-horse. At either side of the door to the writing room stands a bookcase. Above these bookcases hang large prints of battle-scenes. At the left is a fireplace, filled with green branches. Above the narrow mantle-ledge hangs the picture of a man in uniform, draped with a flag of three diagonal stripes, dark blue, orange, and dark blue. Beneath the picture hangs a sheathed sword. At either side of the fireplace are doors to the outer passage. Before the fireplace are two armchairs. At the centre of the room is a table, with three chairs, and across the table, facing the audience, is drawn a small sofa. The furniture all is mellowed with use.

The season is early June. The time is the middle of the morning, ten days subsequent to the happenings of the Prologue.

Seated at the table in the writing room, the Professor drives a busy pen. On the rocking-horse sits Roland, with toy sword, helmet, and cuirass, and a toy banner, on a staff, in his hand. At the secretary Katherine is busy with notes and check-book. Lydia, by the hearth, is mending a silk flag, the size of a company pennon. At the table Gertrude, and her two friends, Frances and Margaret, girls of her own age and class, are deftly making small nosegays, and putting them into a flat basket, which already is three quarters filled. The table is littered with greens and cut flowers. The women all are in light summer frocks. The sunlight from the long windows is clear and strong. From the street below swells the sound of martial music. The girls' voices at first are barely audible through the din, but as the regiment passes, presently it dies.

MARGARET. Every man that is a man is going to the front.

FRANCES. That's just what I told Richard. So of course he went and volunteered. If he hadn't, I'd never have spoken to him again.

MARGARET. The field uniforms are the sweetest things.

FRANCES. I shall have my new coat cut with a military collar.

GERTRUDE. Stop talking, girls, and hurry! Don't forget the train goes through at half past eleven.

[*Martha comes in at the left, rear door, with a note and a newspaper.*]

FRANCES. Won't the soldiers be glad of the flowers!

LYDIA. You'd much better take them tobacco.

MARTHA. Here's the Extra, ma'am, they were crying in the street. [*Gives paper to Lydia.*] And here's

a note from the hospital, ma'am. [*Gives note to Katherine.*]

MARGARET [*rising*]. Oh, may we look, too? [*Runs to Lydia.*]

FRANCES [*at Lydia's side*]. Another victory. Glorious!

LYDIA. Didn't I tell you? When once this country is roused!

KATHERINE. Gertrude!

GERTRUDE. Yes, dear.

KATHERINE. We'd better cut up all the old linen in the house.

GERTRUDE. Are they short of gauze already?

KATHERINE. Yes. And another trainload of wounded will come in to-night.

FRANCES [*returning to the table*]. Did you hear that, Trudie? Another victory!

GERTRUDE. Oh, yes. I heard.

MARTHA. Here are the keys, ma'am.

KATHERINE. Yes. Are the sandwiches ready?

MARTHA. I've just given the hamper to the porter to take to the station.

KATHERINE. Boil both the hams to-night. The commissary seems to have broken down. If we don't feed the troops that pass through —

GERTRUDE. O Martha! Reach us some flowers from the window boxes. We're running short.

MARTHA [*at rear window, right*]. They're most all dying, Miss. It's the dust the men kick up a-marching by.

[*A bugle sounds in the street and the jingle of harness.*]

ROLAND [*at the window*]. O Mummy, look! Cavalry!

FRANCES. If I don't just love a bugle!

MARTHA. Wouldn't I just like to be a man and go fight the nasty foreigners myself!

PROFESSOR. Martha! Will you please come here?

MARTHA. Yes, sir. [*Goes into writing room.*]

PROFESSOR. At last I have caught that troublesome mouse. Kindly dispose of it! [*Gives Martha a wire trap, which he takes from beneath the writing table.*] I mean, take it away and kill it.

MARTHA [*coming into the parlor*]. Well, I must say! I've never killed nothing in my life, but flies and mosquitoes. And if he wants his mouse killed, he can kill it himself, so there.

ROLAND [*going to her*]. Say, Martha, let's turn him loose in the court.

MARTHA. We will that.

ROLAND. He'll be so scared he'll never come back, and he'll tell all the other little mice never to come here, too.

[*Roland and Martha go out at the forward door left.*]

PROFESSOR [*rising*]. There! That is quite done. [*Comes into the parlor, manuscript in hand.*] This is an appeal to be given to the world in this evening's papers, a trumpet call to the youth of our land to rally to the standard.

GERTRUDE. What's the good of their rallying, if there's no equipment for them?

PROFESSOR. That is beside the point. [*Margaret goes to the rear window for flowers.*] Their backwardness at such a time is appalling.

KATHERINE. So many men have wives and children and old folks that depend upon them.

PROFESSOR. The claims of our country are paramount.

LYDIA. What do you know about it? You've nothing with a claim upon you, except that bowl of gold-fish.

PROFESSOR [*going to her*]. Let me assure you, my dear sister, that if my heart were not weak, and if I were not past the age limit, I should be already at the front. That is, if it were not true now as always that

the pen is mightier than the sword. If I can stir a thousand men to action by my writings, obviously it is better for the nation that I stay at home and write. [*Goes to the door, but turns, smarting with the sense of his wrongs.*] Anybody but a woman would see that!

[*The Professor goes out, forward door, left.*]

GERTRUDE. Hurry, Margaret! It's late!

MARGARET. Just a minute. It's a lot of volunteers are passing now. Come see them, Kate!

KATHERINE. I can't bear to look. They're all so young.

MARGARET. Oh, Basil! [*Turns from window.*] Here's your brother Basil, just coming up the steps. And he's got his uniform at last.

FRANCES [*rising*]. What uniform?

GERTRUDE [*rising*]. They've graduated the first class cadets ahead of time. Basil is a lieutenant now.

[*Basil comes in, forward door, left, in the showy uniform of a hussar lieutenant, which he carries well. You love him at sight.*]

GERTRUDE. Oh, you beautiful thing!

BASIL. Chuck it now! [*Puts busby and gauntlets on chair.*] Good morning, Frances. Good morning, Margaret.

FRANCES. My, but you're splendid!

BASIL. How do you like it, Mother?

LYDIA. Come here! That collar isn't going to rub your neck?

BASIL. Devil a bit!

FRANCES. Don't you want to do something for me?

BASIL [*going to her, with an exaggerated bow*]. My heart is at your feet.

FRANCES. I don't want your heart. I want one of your coat buttons.

BASIL. The penalty for cutting off a button is shooting. Do you want to put a permanent crimp in my career?

FRANCES. But you must have an extra button.

BASIL. I have. [*Takes button from pocket.*] For the dearest girl in the world.

FRANCES. That's me?

MARGARET [*wounded*]. Basil!

BASIL [*turning to Lydia*]. Will you accept it, Mother?

LYDIA [*trying to hide her feelings*]. Foolishness! [*Pockets button.*] I can ease that collar a little. You're staying to lunch?

BASIL. I'm afraid not. Just ran around to say: So long!

KATHERINE. What do you mean?

BASIL. Ripping good luck! We've got our marching orders.

[*The three girls speak together:*]

FRANCES. How perfectly lovely!

MARGARET. This very day?

GERTRUDE. Where are you going?

LYDIA. Marching orders! [*Sinks back in her chair, clutching the flag.*]

BASIL [*bending over her*]. Mother! I say!

LYDIA. It's — a little sudden. Don't mind me! [*Rises, leaving the flag on the chair.*] There are some things to get ready. I'll be down in a minute.

[*Lydia goes out through the writing room.*]

GERTRUDE [*after an instant's troubled pause*]. These flowers must go.

FRANCES. You must have a flower, Basil. To remember me by. [*Puts a flower in his coat.*]

BASIL. Is it likely I'd forget you?

MARGARET [*offering a flower*]. Here, Basil.

BASIL [*taking flower*]. But I'll have to wear one of them behind my ear!

FRANCES. Goose! I'm going to kiss you good-bye. Old playmates! [*Kisses him.*] Good-bye, Gertrude! Good luck, Basil!

[*Frances goes out, forward door left, with the basket of flowers.*]

MARGARET. Good-bye, Basil!

BASIL [*taking her hand*]. Good-bye, Margaret. Don't forget me!

MARGARET. No, never.

[*He starts to draw her to him.*]

FRANCES [*outside*]. Hurry, Margaret! Hurry! Hurry!

[*Margaret goes out, forward door, left.*]

BASIL [*throwing into the wastepaper-basket the flower that Frances gave*]. It gets me how you can have a little idiot like Frances buzzing round you. [*Goes to the window, right, back, putting Margaret's flower in his coat as he does so.*]

GERTRUDE. Thank goodness, we're rid of them at last.

BASIL [*in window*]. She doesn't look back.

GERTRUDE [*impishly*]. Frances?

BASIL. Frances? No! Of course not.

KATHERINE. Where are they sending you?

BASIL. Don't know. [*Turns from window, slightly swaggering, while he gets out a cigarette.*] Oh, the firing line, all right. Great luck! Was afraid the war would be over before I'd had a crack at it. Can't last more than six weeks, you know. We've got the beggars on the run already. So much for all their big guns and new explosives. It's the spirit you put into it counts, I tell you. Hang it all! Got any matches?

KATHERINE. Right here.

BASIL [*going to secretary*]. Seen the papers, haven't you? [*Strikes a match.*] We've had another — Hello! Still got Phil's picture standing round? [*Toward table, smoking.*]

KATHERINE. Why not?

BASIL. Just a matter of taste, that's all. I wonder if the fellow was a spy.

KATHERINE. Now that you're wearing a lieutenant's uniform, it would be a mortal insult to box your ears, wouldn't it?

BASIL [*distinctly embarrassed*]. Well?

KATHERINE. I should hate to have to insult you. Better go to your mother. She's waiting for you.

BASIL [*on way out*]. Coming, Trudie?

GERTRUDE. In a minute. I've got to clear up.

[*Basil goes out through the writing room. Gertrude throws litter from the table into the wastepaper-basket.*]

GERTRUDE. Kate! Basil is right, you know.

KATHERINE. About Phil's picture? [*Rises.*]

GERTRUDE. Yes.

KATHERINE [*going to her*]. Gertrude! Have you thought —

GERTRUDE. I haven't done much else, all these endless days. It's got to stop. Why, Kate, what else can I do? Basil is going to the front. Rob is drilling with his regiment. I belong with them. Not with Phil.

KATHERINE. How much did you ever really care for him?

GERTRUDE. So much that if he came in at that door — if I heard his voice — if I felt his arms about me — What should I do? [*Clings to Katherine, sobbing.*] Oh, I don't know what I should do.

[*Robert comes in, forward door, left, in civilian clothes.*]

ROBERT. Hello! Hello! What's the row?

[*Military music from the street below.*]

GERTRUDE. Oh, let me be! Please! Let me be!

[*Gertrude hurries out, crying, at the rear door left.*]

ROBERT. What's up?

KATHERINE. She's tired to death, that's all. [*Sits on sofa.*]

ROBERT. Not fretting about Phil, is she?

KATHERINE. What should you suppose?

ROBERT. Well, she'd better drop it. Things being

as they are — Can't you see it's impossible? [*Katherine hides her face in her hands.*] What's the matter? [*He sits beside her.*] Come, come, Kate! That isn't like you. Tired, aren't you?

KATHERINE. Tired of hearing them marching by. All day long. All night long. And all the love and kindness that made our lives, trampled under the feet that march.

ROBERT. That's morbid. Come on! Crack a smile, Kate. That's a good girl. You don't want to lose your grip, you know, so early in the game.

[*Music dies slowly away.*]

KATHERINE. So early — You mean the war is only just beginning?

ROBERT. Kate! It hasn't even begun.

KATHERINE. And Basil says: In six weeks!

ROBERT. Yes. And the newspapers report another victory, every day or so.

KATHERINE. You mean they're telling us —

ROBERT. Well — they're not telling us more than half the truth. Don't you worry, dear! In the long run we'll knock those damned cock-sure foreigners down on their knees, yes, and hold 'em there till they promise to be good. But before we can do that, we've got to make an army out of a lot of raw men that never so much as loaded a gun. That isn't done in a day.

KATHERINE. Oh, what's the good of it! What's the use of it! What's the sense of it!

ROBERT. Kate!

KATHERINE. In ten days' fighting you've undone the life-work of thousands of people. There ought to be some other way. There must be some other way.

ROBERT. There, there!

KATHERINE. And you say we haven't even begun! But we women, we've begun already. Do you realize what the distress is like in the families of the poorer men that have volunteered?

ROBERT. Those things will all adjust themselves.

KATHERINE. Do you realize how many babies have been killed already by your war?

ROBERT. What are you talking about?

KATHERINE. So many dead, because the milk in the mother's breast turned poison, when the father went away to war. So many born dead —

ROBERT. That's sentimental. The infant death-rate may soar a bit, but after a war there's always an increase in births.

KATHERINE. If Roland should die, would it console you to know that a dozen children will be born down in the village next winter?

ROBERT [*rising*]. There's no reasoning with you, Kate. Too bad to disagree to-day, of all days. [*Goes to hearth.*] I had something I wanted to tell you.

KATHERINE [*rising*]. Something — bad, you mean.

ROBERT. Nothing dreadful, only — I might have mentioned it before, but I thought, in case I didn't pull it off, no need to fuss you up for nothing. And as long as you're comfortably fixed here —

KATHERINE [*going to him*]. Quick! Quick! Tell me what you're driving at!

ROBERT. Kate, dear!

KATHERINE. You're going to leave me?

ROBERT. Yes.

KATHERINE. With the men that march?

ROBERT. Yes.

KATHERINE. My God! [*Quietly sits down by the hearth.*]

ROBERT. The country needs trained men. Needs 'em desperately. You wouldn't have me hang round home now, would you? I couldn't anyhow. Not with his blood in me [*pointing to the picture over the fireplace*], and the chaps that were his fathers before him.

KATHERINE. I thought — not till later. Your regiment, just raw defensibles —

ROBERT. I'm not waiting for them.

KATHERINE. You've volunteered?

ROBERT. Changed my major's commission for a captaincy in the regulars. Don't you realize? They're short of officers already. I'm to report at Headquarters to-night.

KATHERINE. This very night?

ROBERT. Had my new uniform sent round here. Better get into it, perhaps. [*Starts toward writing room.*]

KATHERINE. And Basil goes to-day. What will your mother do? What shall I do?

ROBERT [*turning quickly*]. Kate!

KATHERINE. All right. [*Controls herself. Rises.*] Yes. Of course. I understand. It's in the blood. My fathers weren't soldiers — but one of them burned at the stake for the faith that was his. How much time have we still?

ROBERT. Well — about an hour.

KATHERINE. No more? Your mother — she'll want a moment, alone. Go to her! Speak to Gertrude! I'll come in a minute.

ROBERT. Kate! [*Catches her to him.*] You see, I didn't realize that the call would come so soon. Kate, dear!

KATHERINE. Don't! I can't bear it. Please go! I'll come presently. I'll come.

[*Robert goes out through the writing room. Katherine sways and sinks on the sofa, covering her face with her hands. After a moment Martha comes in excitedly at the forward door left.*]

MARTHA. If you please, ma'am.

KATHERINE. Not now, Martha. I can't.

MARTHA. O ma'am! He's come back.

KATHERINE [*looking up.*] Who?

MARTHA. Mr. Philip.

KATHERINE. Phil!

MARTHA. He wants to see you. He's waiting downstairs.

KATHERINE [*rising*]. Not here in this house?

MARTHA. Yes, ma'am.

KATHERINE. In this town where everybody knows him! Why, the people in the street — the very neighbors — if they should raise the cry of spy!

MARTHA. O ma'am! Not like that poor man they —

KATHERINE. Send him up here quick! And don't let any one else in. [*Martha starts to go.*] Say I'm not at home.

[*Phil comes in headlong at the forward door.*]

PHIL [*catching her last words*]. You've got to see me, Katherine.

[*Martha goes out.*]

KATHERINE. Oh, you crazy boy!

PHIL [*grasping her hands*]. Listen to me!

KATHERINE. Why aren't you safe across your own frontier? You've had ten days.

PHIL. Ten days? Yes. Ten days like ten years. I've been hiding out in the suburbs. I've been waiting for a word from Gertrude.

KATHERINE. Phil!

PHIL. Where is she?

KATHERINE. Here.

PHIL. Why hasn't she sent me a word? Didn't you get my letters?

KATHERINE. Yes.

PHIL. Then why hasn't she written? What's wrong? Tell me, Katherine! Tell me! I've come here to find out. I don't go till I do find out.

[*Gertrude comes in at the rear door left.*]

GERTRUDE. O Kate! Rob is calling for you.

PHIL [*turning, arms out*]. Gertrude!

GERTRUDE [*instinctively, straight to his arms*]. Phil! Phil! [*Recovering herself, she draws back.*] Oh, no! no!

KATHERINE [*in the doorway of the writing room*]. Say what you came to say. I'll go to Rob.

GERTRUDE. Don't leave me, Kate!

KATHERINE. He's risked his life to come here. You've got to listen to him.

[*Katherine goes out through the writing room.*]

GERTRUDE. There's nothing to say. You belong there. I belong here.

PHIL. Belong to what? To a lot of crazy savages, gone drunk with newspaper-lies?

GERTRUDE. You shan't speak so of my countrymen!

PHIL. My own precious countrymen are just as wild-eyed as yours. We don't belong to either camp. We belong to each other.

GERTRUDE. No, no! That's all past!

PHIL. You bet it isn't. Sit down! Come! [*Draws her down on the sofa, and sits beside her.*] Listen to me, Trudie! Get the noise of the marching out of your ears. Remember what it was like, spring twilight, there in the garden, when we first kissed. [*Kisses her.*]

GERTRUDE [*clinging to him*]. O Phil! These last days — they've been an awful dream.

PHIL. That's all we'll let this war be to us, an awful dream. We're going to get out of it.

GERTRUDE. How can we?

PHIL. Now listen! You sail for America next week. I'll send you to an exchange professor that I know. His wife will look after you. I'll join you inside the month. We'll be married.

GERTRUDE. And I thought it was all over and done with!

PHIL. They'll give me an instructor's berth, and a room in the laboratory. I'll get at the research. While they're killing over here, I'll be hammering out a way to cure. Isn't that as worth while?

GERTRUDE. Why, yes. Of course!

PHIL. And we'll have a shelter to offer to your mother and to Katherine, if things go wrong.

GERTRUDE. If things — [*Slowly comprehending.*] If things go wrong? You mean you think your people will get the better of my people?

PHIL. Dear, I only said if.

GERTRUDE [*rising*]. But you think it.

PHIL. What else can I think? I know the kind of fight my country is going to make. There's only one outcome possible. [*Rises.*] But all that has nothing to do with us, dear, has it?

GERTRUDE. Yes. Everything — everything. I've got to stand by. Because my country is going to need every ounce of strength that's in every last man and woman, too. Because your treacherous country —

PHIL. Treacherous!

GERTRUDE. Yes. Haven't you been arming yourselves?

PHIL. It's hardly fair to call us treacherous because you've chosen to be blind.

GERTRUDE. Why —

PHIL. A nation's got to do one of two things: arm itself or else stop talking war. You've gone about bragging of your past, with a blunderbuss made in 1830. Now we'll turn to with real guns and teach you —

GERTRUDE. Phil!

PHIL [*realizing what he has said*]. I didn't mean it. I didn't mean it. [*Going to her.*] One country is to me no more than another. Trudie! Please!

GERTRUDE. You may believe what you're saying. But it isn't so. You belong with the foreigners, after all. And they've behaved like savages.

PHIL. Remember, dear, my father and my mother belong to that race of savages.

GERTRUDE. Yes. I remember at last. Oh, I was crazy! Even for a minute to think that we could ever —

PHIL. Listen to me!

GERTRUDE [*turning from him*]. No, no! [*Snatches the flag from her mother's chair.*] This is my flag. My father fought for it. His father —

PHIL. Don't be theatric, dear.

GERTRUDE. Yes, that's just what you would say — a man who turns his back on his homeland — who runs away when others fight —

PHIL. Yes. Running into a laboratory, where I've risked death a hundred times, and no bugles and flags about it either.

GERTRUDE. But I stand by my country. If I can help one wounded boy that has fought for his country —

PHIL. You don't know what you're saying, Trudie. [*Goes to her.*] You're tired. You're hysterical. [*Takes her in his arms.*]

GERTRUDE. Let me go!

PHIL. Listen to me! Listen! We'll give up the thought of America. I don't ask you to marry me now. I ask you only to wait.

GERTRUDE. No, no!

PHIL. Only to say that you love me and you'll wait. Only that! O my dear! Don't you realize it's our lives we're settling now, for keeps?

GERTRUDE. And do you think I'll tie my life to a coward?

PHIL [*drawing back, mortally hurt*]. Trudie!

[*Robert, in the uniform of an infantry captain, comes through the writing room, followed by Katherine.*]

KATHERINE. Wait, Rob! Wait!

GERTRUDE. Here's where I belong. Here's where I stay.

ROBERT [*coming into the parlor, to Phil*]. What are you doing here?

PHIL. Wasting time. [*Goes blindly to the right.*]

[*Basil comes through the writing room.*]

BASIL. What's the row? [*Seeing Phil.*] Come back, have you?

GERTRUDE. He wants me to marry him. But I won't go with him.

ROBERT [*beneath his breath*]. You sneak!

BASIL. Case for the detention camp, this time, Rob.

PHIL [*facing the brothers*]. Well?

ROLAND [*outside*]. Daddy!

ROBERT. Keep him out!

[*Before Basil can move to intercept him, Roland runs in at the rear door left, and casts himself upon Phil.*]

ROLAND. O my Phil! Did you come back to see us?

KATHERINE. Rob! Please! Please! You know what brought him here.

ROBERT [*after a moment, pointing off through writing room*]. That way is clear. For old sake's sake, you're free to go that way, if you go quick.

PHIL. Thanks! [*Sets down Roland.*] I like the front way better.

KATHERINE. Phil! No! If they take you at our door!

PHIL. I came safe. I shall go safe. I am the sort looks out always for safety.

KATHERINE. But where are you going?

PHIL. Back to my own country. Then to hell very likely.

[*Phil goes out by the forward door.*]

GERTRUDE. Oh! They won't kill him! [*Starts after Phil.*]

[*Robert stops her.*]

BASIL [*in window at back*]. The street's clear. Or he wouldn't have risked it.

ROBERT. Good old Trudie!

ROLAND [*curled up on the sofa, sobbing.*] Phil!

BASIL [*going to him*]. Buck up, old man!

[*Lydia appears in the doorway of the writing room. Very faintly from the street sounds the music of the*

March-out, which swells louder and louder as the act goes on.]

LYDIA. Boys! It's time, if you're to take that train.

ROBERT. Roland! Stop crying. Come, come! [*Leads him to Katherine.*] Remember you're to take care of your mother.

LYDIA. Give me that flag, Gertrude!

GERTRUDE [*beside herself, kissing the flag passionately*]. O Mother! Mother!

LYDIA. Hush! It was the flag of your father's company, Basil. Bring it home, as he brought it! Bring it home!

BASIL. Yes, Mother. [*Kisses her, and places her, half fainting, on the sofa.*] Good girl, Sis! [*Embraces Gertrude.*] Good-bye! Six weeks from now. We'll have them cleaned up by then, the scallawags! [*Catching up busby and gloves.*] Come on, Rob, you duffer! Good-bye, Kate! Six weeks and a captaincy! Good-bye!

[*Basil goes out at forward door.*]

LYDIA. My little boy! Rob! My little boy!

ROBERT [*kneeling before her*]. There, there, Mother! It's all right. It's all right. You've got Gertrude. You've got Kate. Take care of each other. It won't be long. [*Turns to Katherine.*] Old girl! [*Kisses her, snatches up his cap, goes hurriedly to the door.*] Good-bye!

ROLAND [*running after Robert*]. Good-bye, Daddy!

[*Robert goes out. The door closes in Roland's grieved and puzzled little face.*]

LYDIA. Basil! My little, little boy!

GERTRUDE [*seated at table, raising her head*]. Do you think you're the only one that's given? I've given. All that I have. For my country. Freely. Joyfully.

[*Frances and Margaret run in at the rear door left.*]

FRANCES. Such a crowd! We ran in the back way.

MARGARET. They're gone!

FRANCES. No, not yet.

[*The two girls run to the window, rear, Roland to the front window.*]

GERTRUDE [*rising unsteadily*]. Quick! The flowers! All that there are!

[*The three girls crowd in the rear window, tearing up the flowers from the window boxes, and casting them to the troops that pass below, with broken cries of "Good luck!" "Good-bye!" that are drowned in the music of the March-out. Katherine stands with eyes covered. Roland tugs at her skirt and draws her to the window where he stands waving his flag. The music is at its fortissimo. Lydia nerves herself, rises, and totters a step toward the window.*]

CURTAIN

ACT II

It is the same parlor, where the girls in summer frocks were making nosegays, but since that morning nine months of war have passed. The curtains are drawn across the arched doorway to the writing room. The windows are half coated with frost. The window boxes are gone. The gold-fish and their stand are near the hearth, where a meager coal fire burns. On the book-case to the right of the door to the writing room is a large lighted lamp. On the mantel-shelf a pair of lighted candles. Upon the table, on a large tray, is a coffee machine, with its accessories, sugar basin, cups, and spoons.

The season is February, bitterly cold. The time is early evening.

Beside the hearth, wrapped in a shawl, Lydia sits knitting. With the passing of the months she has aged and thinned. The Professor cowers on the sofa, with a gray shawl over his stooping shoulders. In the rear window stands Gertrude, looking down into the street. She wears over her house dress a knitted jacket. All three have the air of people worn out with anxiety and grief and apathetic with despair. Only Gertrude blazes with rebellion. From the street sounds monotonously the roll of the wheels of heavy artillery. After a moment the Professor speaks.

PROFESSOR. Are they still marching by?

GERTRUDE. Don't you hear the wheels of the artillery?

PROFESSOR. The foreigners, in our city!

LYDIA. How can you bear to watch them?

GERTRUDE. I want to see the guns that finished us. Do you remember how we stood at the window, eight months ago? How we cheered and threw flowers?

LYDIA. It was the day that Basil went to the front.

GERTRUDE. The war was to end in six weeks. We believed it. Fools!

LYDIA. I've dropped another stitch.

GERTRUDE [*going to her, with compunction*]. How can you knit, and your hands so cold?

LYDIA. It takes up my mind.

GERTRUDE. I'll fix the fire.

[*She kneels on the hearth, and lays on the coal, a piece at a time, lifting the pieces with a bit of newspaper, in order to do it without noise.*]

PROFESSOR. Yes, the room is shockingly cold. Dear, dear! [*Sits by the hearth.*]

LYDIA. Carefully, Gertrude. Don't waste the coal!

GERTRUDE. What's the sense of saving coal to warm those foreign brutes? [*Rises.*] Let's be comfortable for an hour. We may not live any longer. [*Goes to the window, front.*]

PROFESSOR. Non-combatants in an undefended town! The invaders are bound by every usage of civilized warfare —

GERTRUDE. What's civilized warfare got to do with it? Still marching! No end to them. We used to laugh at them for playing soldier. Playing soldier! It was we that played. They made a business of it.

LYDIA. But God is on our side. We must triumph in the end.

GERTRUDE. Phil said: Either arm, or stop talking war. We wouldn't arm, but we liked to talk. And there are the foreigners marching through our streets. They'll be quartered under our roof. They'll be —

LYDIA. Hush! Listen!

GERTRUDE. What is it?

LYDIA. Go to the door. I heard the bell ring.

GERTRUDE. Why, it can't be, Mother. They wouldn't ring. And no one else would come.

[*The door bell rings.*]

LYDIA. I said so!

[*Katherine comes from the writing room, drawing the curtains close behind her. She wears a knitted coat over her house dress.*]

KATHERINE. Some one is ringing. Didn't you hear? The noise will wake Roland. [*Comes into parlor.*] They must come in.

GERTRUDE. I'll go down.

KATHERINE. No. You'd better let me.

[*Katherine goes out at the forward door. The bell rings again.*]

PROFESSOR [*querulously*]. Where has she gone?

LYDIA. Listen!

PROFESSOR. There is a draught from that door.

GERTRUDE. Please be quiet, Uncle. [*Goes to the door.*] There is some one crying. I can hear them on the stairs.

MARGARET [*outside, sobbing*]. I'm so glad to find somebody. I'm so glad.

GERTRUDE. Why, it's Margaret.

[*Katherine comes in again, supporting Margaret, very pale, in a plain hat and loose dark cloak. Gertrude closes the door after they have entered.*]

MARGARET. Oh, let me stay here! Let me stay!

KATHERINE. What else should you do? Only don't cry, silly! You'll wake up Roland. Let us help you out of your things. [*Takes off her cloak.*] There's a little coffee left, Gertrude. Start the machine!

[*Gertrude, at back of table, starts the coffee machine. Katherine sits by Margaret on the sofa. It is now seen that Margaret wears on her left arm a Red Cross band and that her hand rests, bandaged, in a sling.*]

LYDIA. We thought you were still at St. Mary's.

KATHERINE. When did you leave the hospital?

MARGARET. There isn't any hospital any more. They dropped bombs into St. Mary's night before last. I got my arm burned, helping to carry out our wounded men. We couldn't get them all. [*Sobs.*] We couldn't get them all.

KATHERINE. Don't, dear! You mustn't. Don't!

MARGARET. I wasn't any use, with only one arm. So I started. It was the last train into town. Last night that was. But now — there's no way to get out.

KATHERINE. Yes. It's too late now.

MARGARET. But why have you stayed on? I couldn't believe my eyes, when I looked up and saw Gertrude at the window.

KATHERINE. Roland has been sick.

LYDIA. With typhoid, yes. We couldn't move him.

KATHERINE. But you — you ought to have gone, Mother.

LYDIA. Where? The enemy hold the north. They're probably stabling their horses in our parlor now. Cutting down Rob's young trees to build their fires.

KATHERINE. Mother, you're shivering. [*Rises.*] I'll bring more coal.

GERTRUDE. Let me, Kate!

KATHERINE. No, you did it last time.

[*Katherine goes out with the coal scuttle at the rear door left.*]

MARGARET. The servants have all left you?

LYDIA. Yes. Martha was the last.

MARGARET. Why, I never thought that Martha —

GERTRUDE. She had to go to help her sister. There was a baby coming. She's been gone a month.

MARGARET. I hope it wasn't to the north she went.

GERTRUDE. Yes. It was.

MARGARET. And have you any word of — Robert?

GERTRUDE. He is on the battle-line in the west. They have made him a major. He has the medal of honor.

MARGARET. And — and —

GERTRUDE. Basil? No. No word in three months. Not since the river fight.

LYDIA [*in a strained voice*]. Once, in his first campaign, I was seven months without a word from your father. Seven whole months!

MARGARET. Missing? Not that! Anything but that!

[*Gertrude sits beside her, comforting.*]

LYDIA. Missing? Why, it means no more than that a man is held a prisoner, or maybe wounded in some field hospital. I've lived through two wars. I know what I'm talking about.

[*Katherine comes in again with the coal.*]

KATHERINE. We must try to make this coal last till midnight. [*Lays on a few pieces, carefully and quietly.*]

GERTRUDE [*going to the machine*]. It's lucky we have the big lamp to help out.

KATHERINE. Yes. There's still a barrel of oil below.

MARGARET [*rising*]. Shall I draw the curtains?

GERTRUDE. No, no! The orders are that windows shall be lighted and unscreened.

KATHERINE [*rising*]. Isn't the coffee ready?

GERTRUDE [*filling cup*]. I'm afraid it's barely lukewarm.

MARGARET. No matter!

GERTRUDE. Here's the sugar. [*Gives cup to Katherine.*]

KATHERINE [*carrying the cup to Margaret, at the right*]. I'm sorry there's no condensed milk to spare. But we have to keep it all for Roland.

GERTRUDE. They'll take it when they come. You'll see they will, the brutes!

KATHERINE. What's the good of it, Gertrude? They're here in the town. Any minute they'll be in this house.

MARGARET. Oh! [*Lets the cup fall.*] They're here — this minute! Look! Look!

KATHERINE. Be quiet! What is it?

MARGARET [*pointing*]. The door!

[*Slowly the rear door at left is pushed open and Martha comes in. Her dark dress and coarse shoes are muddied and a little disordered. Her hair is a little displaced. Her hat is broken. She is very quiet, only her eyes are a little too bright.*]

GERTRUDE. Why, Martha!

KATHERINE. Blessed woman! Where did you come from?

MARTHA. I came in by the back way, as usual, ma'am. Shan't I cook you some dinner? I have come back to stay, if you please.

KATHERINE. But how did you ever get here? [*Sits at left of table.*] With the enemy filling the roads —

MARTHA. I came on a train. Then I walked. I have come back. There is no meat in the larder, but I can make a soup of tinned things.

LYDIA. I can't understand. Where did you leave your sister?

MARTHA [*pleasantly*]. Oh, I haven't any sister. Look here! [*From her bosom takes a child's little knitted glove.*] That's Patty's glove, my little niece with the pretty curls. I made it myself for her. We heard in the morning that the foreigners were coming into the town. A bomb fell right in our street and tore an old man's arm off. Sister took the baby. It was two weeks old. I took Patty. She had her doll in her arms. We got onto a tram. We was trying to get the station. They said there still were trains —

KATHERINE. Don't try to tell us, Martha! Don't!

MARTHA. Why not? I tell it over to myself all day and all night. There was a bomb struck a house. Patty cried. I can feel her little arms round my neck. There was another bomb, and the tram opened up, just like a paper box when you hit it. You know how 'tis at the butcher's shop, all sort of red and shapeless and dripping? Well, it was like that where my sister had been, with the baby. I just took Patty and I ran. I had her tight by the hand, and I could see the station at the end of the street. Then I heard 'em screaming that the soldiers were coming, and horses galloping, and I fell, and the crowd went over me. When I got up, I had Patty's glove in my hand. But I couldn't find her. I kept asking folks if they'd seen a little girl, with curls and a doll in her arms. I kept asking till the houses began to burn. Then I came away. That's all that's left of my sister and Patty and the little baby. Funny to think of, isn't it? [*Puts the glove back in her bosom.*] Now I'll get dinner.

KATHERINE [*going to her*]. Listen, Martha! You must go to your room — your old room. I'll bring something that you must take. You must sleep.

[*The door bell rings furiously.*]

MARGARET [*screaming*]. Oh! Oh!

GERTRUDE. They've come!

[*Heavy knocking on the door below.*]

KATHERINE. Yes. At last. They mustn't make that noise. [*Starts to the door.*]

MARTHA. You can't demean yourself, ma'am. I'll go to the door.

[*Martha goes out at the forward door left. An instant of silence and strained listening. Then renewed beating on the door.*]

GERTRUDE. Oh! And we're helpless! Helpless!

MARGARET [*half screaming*]. I'm afraid — afraid!

KATHERINE. Pull yourself together! Remember what race you belong to. Stop it now!

PROFESSOR. Non-combatants — our rights are clear and unviolable. The law of nations —

THE CORPORAL [*outside*]. Make now an end of that! I go where I shall damn please.

[*Enter at the forward door left, shoving Martha before him, the foreign Corporal. A man of forty odd, in shabby cavalry uniform, overcoat and gauntlets, with a carbine slung across his back. No villain, just a coarse, common man, capable of rough geniality, even of rough kindliness. Just now, cold, tired, and hungry, he shows few signs of either quality.*]

CORPORAL. Trot in and announce me, old girl!

[*Katherine steps between him and Martha, who retreats to the right.*]

KATHERINE. You are billeted here, I suppose?

CORPORAL [*handing her a paper*]. You can bet we are. The Lieutenant, me, the Corporal, and three of our men. [*Crosses to Martha.*] Hurry up, old girl! We want grub and plenty of it, too. Oh, you'll get your taste, do not be afraid. We're not risking a dose o' rat poison in our porridge. [*Pulling off his gauntlets.*] May as well bring us up also a bottle or two of wine. The old chap has some down in the cellar.

PROFESSOR [*rising*]. What!

CORPORAL. Oh, you cannot fool me! I was foreman in a shop on the next street, until the war broke out.

KATHERINE. Martha, cook enough for five men. As quickly as possible.

MARTHA. Yes, ma'am.

[*Martha goes out at the rear door, left.*]

CORPORAL. Is this your warmest room?

KATHERINE. Yes.

CORPORAL. Well, it is not quite so cold as out o' doors. If it's the best you got, why, you can vacate. Clear out, I mean. You to the cock-loft. The Lieutenant must have this room.

PROFESSOR. My good man —

KATHERINE. Uncle!

PROFESSOR. Let me point out to you that these women —

CORPORAL. Shut up, you old idiot! I had enough of your gab last year, drifting into your popular lectures down the street here. Survival of the fittest, that's what you were preaching. And the fit survive, because they get the fire and the grub. That is logic, eh?

LYDIA [*rising*]. Charles! Come!

[*Lydia and the Professor go out at the rear door left. Margaret follows after them, shrinking, with her eyes on the Corporal.*]

CORPORAL. Look here, you don't need to make like that, my girl. I am no bold, bad ravisher. None of us are. We want the grub, and to get warmed up. God! We've seen women enough a'ready. [*Gertrude puts her arm about Margaret and leads her to the door. The Corporal spies the coffee machine and pounces upon it.*] Hey! What's this? Coffee? Ah, the blamed stuff is cold. [*To Katherine.*] Hold on, you!

[*Margaret hurries out rear door left. Katherine pauses on stair to writing room. Gertrude runs to her.*]

GERTRUDE. Katherine!

KATHERINE. Go stay with Roland. He might be frightened. Go to him. I'm all right. [*Gertrude goes into writing room. Katherine comes to the table.*] Yes, the coffee is cold. Wait and I'll warm it up.

CORPORAL. Hurry up, then. Want it hot and plenty when the Lieutenant comes. Got to treat him nicely. [*Saunters leisurely toward the hearth.*] Kid from the War School. A fine chap, oh yes! But he's so newly hatched lieutenant, the shell is still sticking to him. In Heaven's name! Do you call that then a fire? [*Catches up coal scuttle.*]

KATHERINE. Stop!

CORPORAL. Huh?

KATHERINE. Don't make a noise! [*Goes to him.*]

I've got a sick child in that room. Put the scuttle down. I'll lay on the coal myself.

CORPORAL. Damn foolishness! I can't wait all day. Let go there!

[*Katherine clings to the scuttle, facing him, defiant. The forward door at left is flung open noisily and the Lieutenant comes in, followed by a Trooper. The Lieutenant is about twenty, a slender young fellow, unshaven, sunken-eyed, haggard with exhaustion. He staggers as he enters.*]

CORPORAL [*going to him*]. Here! Let me, sir!

LIEUTENANT. You do not need to hold my arm. [*Moves unsteadily toward the sofa.*] It is twenty years about since I was last a baby.

CORPORAL. You go down the stairs and make some fires burn. [*Trooper salutes and goes out rear door left. Katherine kneels and replenishes her fire. The Lieutenant wavers where he has halted. The Corporal catches him.*] Will you please sit down, sir? [*Puts him on the sofa.*] Shall I pull off your boots?

LIEUTENANT. Damn it, no! You touch me, and I think I break to pieces like an icicle. This damned country!

CORPORAL [*to Katherine*]. Have you brandy?

KATHERINE. I've no more left. But I'll have the coffee ready in a minute.

LIEUTENANT. To hell with your brandy! It is always brandy that you say. I do not want brandy. I want only to be warm. And a little while to sleep.

CORPORAL. You stretch out here, sir. I'll bring some blankets.

LIEUTENANT. Curse your soul! How can I sleep? There are the horses. Stable inspection. [*Painfully he tries to draw the gauntlets from his half frozen hands.*]

CORPORAL. Just stay here quiet, sir, and leave things to me. Let me pull off those gauntlets.

LIEUTENANT. Look here! I am not a baby. Clear out, will you?

CORPORAL [*saluting*]. Yes, sir.

[*The Corporal goes out at the forward door left.*]

LIEUTENANT. He is a great fool. Because his mother nursed me he thinks — Well, where is that coffee?

KATHERINE [*going to the table*]. I think it's ready. [*As she moves the cups she makes a slight noise.*]

LIEUTENANT [*turning quickly*]. Place that machine at the other end of the table!

KATHERINE [*moving the tray*]. Certainly. Would you mind telling me why?

LIEUTENANT. Because ladies of your country have sometimes, in their playfulness, spilt blazing alcohol upon men of ours with their backs turned, and given them by mistake hydrochloride solution instead of water.

KATHERINE. Do you know men to whom such things have happened?

LIEUTENANT. I know men who know men to whom it has happened. And I have read in our newspapers. [*Again he wrestles with his gauntlets, but desists with a gasp of pain.*] Ah! [*Katherine fills a cup with coffee.*] Oh, I am not scared, you know. Give me that coffee!

KATHERINE. It's pretty hot. You can't drink it yet.

LIEUTENANT. This rotten country. [*His head droops.*]

[*Katherine looks at him, and sees no more than a tired, half-frozen, miserable boy. Obviously, if he were a very little younger, he would cry outright. She surrenders to the eternal mother in her.*]

KATHERINE. I can cool your coffee with some condensed milk. [*Going to the bookcase, she takes a can from behind the books.*]

LIEUTENANT [*feebly lifting his head*]. That's a

funny place to keep milk. [*Begins again to work off his gauntlets.*]

KATHERINE. I have kept it for my boy that is sick. Kept it hidden. [*Puts milk into the coffee.*] Sugar?

LIEUTENANT. Two lumps. [*Convention asserts itself.*] Please!

KATHERINE [*coming to him*]. Can you hold the cup?

LIEUTENANT. My fingers — they are like sticks of wood.

KATHERINE. I'll hold it for you. [*Sets the cup to his lips.*] Not too hot?

LIEUTENANT. No. It's fine. Go slow! [*He drinks, then pauses, looking up at her.*] Tell me! You are maybe after all on our side? Some of the folks are, secretly.

KATHERINE. Oh, no! My husband is at the front. Have some more?

LIEUTENANT. Yes. [*Drinks, then pauses.*] I had forgot, you know. My cap on in the house. [*He makes a futile effort to remove it with his numbed hand.*]

KATHERINE. Shall I take it off?

LIEUTENANT. Yes. Please!

[*Katherine removes his cap, and lays it on the table, then pours another cup of coffee.*]

KATHERINE. Shall we get you something to eat?

LIEUTENANT. I got my throat sore clear into my ears. I can't swallow food at all. You know, you do not want to think they all go to pieces in our army like me. It is not a month I have been at the front. Pretty soon I get used to it.

KATHERINE. Hold the cup in your hands. It will thaw out your fingers. Can you stand it?

LIEUTENANT. Yes. Won't you — won't you sit down?

KATHERINE. Thank you. [*Takes a chair, sits at a little distance.*]

LIEUTENANT [*drinking coffee throughout*]. We aren't,

you know, really brutes. But you treat us like we are, and think we are, then we are. Perhaps if we'd met before the war — and that isn't yet a year ago — we might have been nice and polite to each other, and maybe friends. Funny, isn't it?

KATHERINE. So funny that I think the angels cry over the joke of it.

LIEUTENANT. I came pretty near coming to your country last spring on vacation. Might have come to this very town. I had a cousin was staying here —

[*First Trooper comes in again, with a bucket of coal.*]

LIEUTENANT. Well, what is it, then?

FIRST TROOPER. Shan't I fix the fire, sir? [*Starts to throw on coal.*]

KATHERINE. Please don't make a noise!

LIEUTENANT. You hear the lady, blockhead! Lay on the coals, one piece at a time, like she wants.

FIRST TROOPER. Yes, sir. [*Kneels and replenishes the fire.*]

LIEUTENANT. You are here alone in the house?

KATHERINE. There are four other women and an old man.

LIEUTENANT. Where are they, then?

KATHERINE. Upstairs.

LIEUTENANT. Are there fires upstairs?

KATHERINE. No.

LIEUTENANT. You, there! You will go upstairs and give to the ladies my compliments. Say they are welcome to use here the room that is warm. Be civil!

[*First Trooper salutes and goes out at the rear door left.*]

KATHERINE [*rising*]. Thank you!

LIEUTENANT [*rising*]. We aren't, you see, brutes, any more than your own men are, maybe. See here! I think now I can hold a pen. I will write a paper that you stick on your door. It will help you maybe.

KATHERINE. You're good.

[*Gertrude writes rapidly, her face in the candlelight seraphic with content. The Lieutenant turns and faces Lydia. She gravely inclines her head. He bows.*]

LYDIA. You — are their leader?

LIEUTENANT. Yes, Madam.

LYDIA. You are — not very old.

[KATHERINE *proffers an ash-tray.*]

LIEUTENANT. Thanks! I think I do not smoke.

KATHERINE. You look done out. Can't you lie down a bit?

LIEUTENANT. I ought to keep afoot, I think, till my corporal reports.

[*Martha comes in at the rear door, left, with a tray, on which are two cups.*]

MARTHA [*going to Lydia*]. Here is hot soup, ma'am. I made it for you and the Profes —

[*Her voice trails off as she sees the Lieutenant. Lydia waves aside the cup. Martha gives a cup to the Professor.*]

KATHERINE [*going toward the writing room*]. You could lie down on the couch in the inner room. It is quite warm. My boy is asleep there. Why, you trust us, don't you?

LIEUTENANT [*going to her*]. I trust you. It is two nights I have not shut my eyes. I think I will.

[*Martha goes out, rear door, left, with a last glance at the Lieutenant.*]

LIEUTENANT. You are that lady — Katherine — my cousin wrote about?

KATHERINE. I'm Katherine, yes.

LIEUTENANT. Was I pretty beastly at first? I'm — tired. I don't quite remember.

KATHERINE. You'll feel better when you wake. Good rest. [*Holds out her hand.*]

LIEUTENANT [*kissing her hand*]. Yes. That's what I want. Rest!

[*The Lieutenant goes into the writing room. The*

curtains close upon him. Lydia, on the sofa, takes up and fondles his gauntlets. Presently she cries silently.]

PROFESSOR [*querulously*]. This soup is weak. [*Margaret takes his cup and sets it on mantle.*] Thanks! But it is good to see Martha moving about.

KATHERINE. Why, Mother! Mother! [*Goes to Lydia.*] You're not crying? Oh, no! That isn't like you.

LYDIA. He made me think of Basil. The same age — the cavalry uniform. He looked so tired! So cold! O God! My little boy — somewhere — tired, cold, suffering! My little boy! Send him home to me, God! That's all I ask. That's all I'll ever ask. Send him home! Dear God! [*Sobs.*]

KATHERINE. Oh, hush, dear! Hush!

PROFESSOR. Be reasonable, Lydia. Only compute how many people, on both sides of the frontier, are praying in just those terms. How can you believe that there is a God to hear and —

LYDIA. Why should He hear the foreigners? Superstitious wretches! They don't know how to pray. But we have always served God and fought His good fight. He will listen to us. He must listen. Oh, my little boy! Let me see him again. Only let me see him. I'll be satisfied.

MARGARET. What was that?

KATHERINE. Listen, Mother! Please!

MARGARET. I thought I heard Roland speak.

KATHERINE. Yes. It was in that room. [*She goes to the door of the writing room, and parts the curtains a very little.*] No. It's all quiet. It's all right. [*Goes to Gertrude.*] How are you coming on, Trudie?

GERTRUDE. I'm the happiest girl in the world. And I haven't deserved it.

KATHERINE. Dear! Don't be too —

GERTRUDE. Too sure? Why, I'm as sure of Phil as I am of the stars in Heaven. If he's alive — and he is

alive. I know it. I feel it. And when he gets my letter — Bless that little lieutenant! Bless my Phil! God bless us every one this night. [*Writes.*]

[*The Corporal comes in at the left forward door.*]

CORPORAL. Well! Where's the Lieutenant?

KATHERINE. He is lying down in the inner room. [*The Corporal starts toward the writing room.*] Must you disturb him?

CORPORAL. I'll look once at him. [*Parts the curtains slightly.*] Dark in there! Give us here a candle. [*Katherine fetches a candle from the secretary.*] He is, you see, my foster-brother, and my old woman, she will have my skin, if I let him come down with pneumonia.

KATHERINE [*giving him the candle*]. Here you are! Go softly, won't you?

[*The Corporal goes into the writing room.*]

PROFESSOR. You see, it is as I assured you. There are established rules of warfare, as you women fail to realize, and under those rules —

[*The Corporal appears in the doorway of the writing room. His quietude is dreadful. At sight of him the Professor is paralyzed into silence.*]

CORPORAL. Which of you did it?

[*All rise. The Corporal thrusts aside the curtains, between which he is standing. The interior of the writing room is disclosed, under the flickering light of the candle, which he evidently has set at one side. Across the wall, where formerly stood the bookcases, is a crib, on which lies Roland, cowering beneath the bed-clothes. Diagonally, head to the crib, is drawn a couch, upon which, half covered with a rug, lies the Lieutenant, stretched upon his back, with one arm trailing on the floor. There is a dark smear across his throat, and upon the pillow and the sheet.*]

CORPORAL. Come! Speak up!

PROFESSOR [*babbling*]. What, what, what!

GERTRUDE. O my God!

KATHERINE [*in a suffocated voice*]. Roland! Roland! [*Rushes to the writing room.*]

CORPORAL [*intercepting her, grasping her arms*]. No, you don't! Make a man to lie down and rest, and he trusting you, you hell-cat!

[*Several troopers rush into the room by the door left back.*]

KATHERINE [*shrieking*]. Roland! Roland! Have they killed you, too?

FIRST TROOPER. What's the matter?

CORPORAL. Cut the Lieutenant's throat, and he asleep.

GERTRUDE [*rushing to Katherine's aid*]. No, no! [*Flings herself upon the Corporal.*] Let go of her!

ROLAND. Mummy! Mummy!

[*Katherine breaks from the Corporal, rushes to the crib, and lifts Roland in her arms.*]

KATHERINE. Yes, yes! Mother's here.

ROLAND. Don't let her hurt me! I'm afraid.

KATHERINE. Shut your eyes! Don't look, dear! Don't look! [*Brings him down into the main room.*]

ROLAND. Why did she do it? With the kitchen knife. Why did Martha do it?

GERTRUDE. Martha!

ROLAND. She came through the door. O Mummy! I'm afraid.

[*Katherine sits on the sofa, with Roland in her arms. Lydia hurries to her, and puts her shawl about him. Katherine drags off her knitted jacket to wrap around the child.*]

CORPORAL. Call in the patrol.

FIRST TROOPER. Yes, sir. [*Runs to window right forward.*]

CORPORAL. Find that other woman!

[*Two Troopers go out through the writing room.*]

FIRST TROOPER. Hey! They're just making the

rounds. [*Dashes window open.*] Hey, come in here! If you please, sir. [*Turns to Corporal.*] It's grand rounds, sir.

ROLAND. I'm cold, Mummy.

KATHERINE. That draught — Oh, close the window, in pity's name!

[*The Troopers come in from the writing room, dragging Martha between them.*]

SECOND TROOPER. Here she is, sir.

LYDIA. Martha! You couldn't have done it. No, no!

ROLAND. Oh, I'm afraid.

[*At the forward door, left, come in two Troopers, who stand aside at attention. The Foreign Major follows them in — a tall, thin man, pale-featured, impersonal as Death, and as weary.*]

MAJOR. Well? What is now here?

CORPORAL. Our lieutenant, sir, murdered while he was asleep. There's the woman did it.

MAJOR [*going to Martha*]. Have you anything to say?

MARTHA [*taking the child's glove from her bosom*]. That is Patty's glove I knitted. That is all. My sister, the little baby, Patty — all three. When your soldiers came into our town.

MAJOR. It was in the north, your town?

MARTHA. It used to be.

MAJOR. The man you killed was three hundred miles away from there. You were stupid to do this. [*Turns to the Troopers.*] Take her down into the street. Shoot her. Let the neighbors see.

[*The two last-comers of the troopers lay hold of Martha.*]

KATHERINE. Oh, no! Can't you see for yourself that she's insane?

MAJOR. Take her along!

MARTHA [*breaks loose, rushes to Lydia*]. No, no,

no! I wouldn't so much as kill a mouse. You know I wouldn't. [*The Troopers seize her and drag her to the door.*] No, no! I'm afraid of the guns. Don't kill me! Oh, oh! The guns! Don't kill me! No, no, no!

[*The Troopers drag Martha out at the forward door, left. The door goes to upon her cries.*]

MAJOR. Clear the house at once. Then burn it.

[*At a sign from the Corporal, two Troopers go into the writing room, cover the body of the Lieutenant with a sheet, and remove the couch, with the body upon it.*]

KATHERINE. Where are we to go?

MAJOR. Outside our lines. See that they go! [*Turns away to the door.*] It is merciful we do not shoot you all.

GERTRUDE [*running to him*]. Oh! Can't you see my mother is old — and the little boy is ill — and this paper — he left this paper. See! He asked that we be protected.

MAJOR. Yes. You have killed the one man would have saved you. Tear up your paper now. In three minutes. Burn the house.

[*The Major goes out at the forward door, left.*]

KATHERINE. Trudie! Bring shoes for Roland!

CORPORAL. No, you don't! Right as you stand, all of you. Come on now! [*Comes down into the room.*] Clear the house!

LYDIA [*rising*]. No, no! The boy —

PROFESSOR [*starting feebly to snatch down the sword from beneath the picture*]. My father's house — his sword! I will not go alive!

CORPORAL [*striking him contemptuously*]. You damned old fool! Get out!

PROFESSOR [*broken*]. O my God!

LYDIA [*going to him*]. That is foolish, Charles. Before you were right. There is no God. Come!

[*Moving with dignity, Lydia leads out the old man at the left. Margaret hurries after them.*]

CORPORAL. All of you!

KATHERINE. It will kill my boy.

CORPORAL. It was a mother's boy you killed in there. Will you get out? Or shall we —

FIRST TROOPER [*at the window*]. Hi! They've got her up against the wall. She'll get it now. [*From the street comes Martha's shriek.*] Damn ye, go burn!

[*Simultaneously with the shriek and his cry, sounds a volley of rifles.*]

ROLAND. Mummy! Mummy!

KATHERINE. Dear, we'll carry you. Come, Gertrude!

[*Carrying between them the child, huddled in the shawl and the knitted jacket, the two women move toward the door.*]

ROLAND. I'm so cold, Mummy! I'm so cold!

[*As Katherine and Gertrude go out, forward door, left, with Roland, Troopers rush in through all three doors. First Trooper with his carbine smashes the glass in the secretary. Others tear down the hangings, demolish the chairs, smash the bookcases, all with half audible imprecations. The Corporal directs the havoc.*]

CORPORAL. Bring more petrol! There's a barrel below. Tear down that rag. It will make a blaze. We'll show them! Hurry up that petrol! [*A Trooper tears down the flag from beneath the picture and casts it among the débris. A Third Trooper runs in with a can of petrol, which he pours upon the mass.*] Kill our men sleeping, damn them!

[*With his carbine the Corporal smashes the chandelier above the table. A Fourth Trooper snatches from the hearth blazing coals in a shovel and hurls them upon the heap of broken furniture.*]

CURTAIN

ACT III

The little farmstead, which has been seized by the advancing army, lies close to the firing line. At the left is the farmhouse, a small, mean building, of stone, with casement windows, and an inset porch, from which the entrance door opens. At the side of the porch, nearer the audience, is a bench, on which stands a water-bucket. Not far distant is a rough table, fetched from the house, with a stool at either side, and, before it, a bench. On the table are a pad of paper, several pencils, a map, held in place by small stones, and a mug with a little water. Farther back is a tree, the branches of which overshadow the roof of the house. Across the courtyard, at the back, runs a high wall of brick, with a slight coping of thatch, which is pierced at the centre by a wide gateway. Through the gateway is seen a glimpse of rugged autumn country, and in the foreground, passing the gate, a heavy road. At the right is an open shed. Beneath this shed is a ladder, and near by a heap of straw and a few broken farm implements. Toward the front of the shed is a table, on which rest two field-telephones. Beside it, by way of seat, an old box. Between the shed and the audience is a lane, masked by a clump of trees, and with a barred gate that stands open.

The season is September. Seven months have passed since the town-house burned. The time is late afternoon.

At the left of the table the Adjutant, a keen young martinet of thirty, is busily writing. At the telephone,

with the headpiece in place, sits a Sergeant, a heavily built man of forty odd. Huddled in the straw beneath the shed lies Thomas, a child of six or seven, barefooted, in a soiled smock and trousers, with a white, soiled face. At the back, by the gateway, two soldiers are on sentry duty. One of them is the Woodsy Boy, a different being in his stiff uniform and service boots. He is gnawing surreptitiously at a piece of bread. From the distance comes the boom of heavy guns, heard intermittently throughout the act.

SERGEANT [*receiving a message*]. Yes, sir. This is the outpost at Crossways. I'll hold the line. [*To Adjutant.*] Headquarters, sir. They want the Colonel.

ADJUTANT [*to First Soldier*]. Headquarters calling. Tell the Colonel.

FIRST SOLDIER. Yes, sir. [*Turns to gateway.*] He's just here.

[*Robert comes through the gateway. He wears the shabby service uniform of a colonel of infantry, and a not very well kept mustache. In the months of fighting he has in every way "gone off." His voice when he speaks is almost a "whiskey voice." At his heels, with a map in his hand, comes the Major, a dull, commonplace man of forty.*]

MAJOR. We've got 'em on the run, I tell you. Cleaned 'em off the heights here. Chased 'em across the river there.

ROBERT. Humph! Watch out for the come-back.

MAJOR. We can smother them with numbers.

ROBERT. They're on their own doorstep now. With their backs up.

ADJUTANT. Headquarters on the line, sir.

ROBERT. Eh? Then why in hell —

ADJUTANT. Just this minute, sir.

ROBERT. Right! [*Goes to the telephone. The Major seats himself at the table and goes over the maps*

with the Adjutant.] Headquarters? — Yes, sir. We are entrenching a kilometer beyond the farm-house.— Yes, sir. We can hold it.— How many, sir? — Fine! Thanks. [*To Sergeant.*] Get the commissary! [*Goes to the table.*] Two more regiments before midnight. If they try to rush us, they'll get what's coming to them.

[*Thomas steals out from beneath the shed and very timidly takes up and eats the crumbs that the Woodsy Boy has let fall.*]

MAJOR. Not much like it was a year ago.

ROBERT. No. We can beat 'em now at their own game. Anything in your flask, old man?

MAJOR. About enough to drown a fly.

ROBERT. Let's see the color of it. [*Reluctantly the Major hands over his flask.*] Sorry — between friends. Ebb tide here, till the supplies get through. [*Goes toward house.*] And I've got another touch of rheumatics coming on.

[*Robert goes into the house.*]

ADJUTANT. Rather a pity!

MAJOR. Pity your grandmother! He's a better soldier drunk than half of 'em sober. Give us your pencil! If there's half a minute, I'll scratch a letter home. September —

ADJUTANT. Twenty-first.

MAJOR. Hm! That's my oldest girl's birthday. [*Writes.*]

WOODSY BOY [*holding out his piece of bread, to Thomas.*] Here, Kid! Take it. Come on. Don't be scared.

[*Thomas snatches the bread and retreats a little.*]

FIRST SOLDIER [*going to the Woodsy Boy, but keeping a wary eye on the two officers.*] You're green, all right. When you've seen as many stray brats as I have — well, you'll eat what little grub you get your paws on.

WOODSY BOY. What becomes of him?

FIRST SOLDIER. Why, a nice young lady nurse will

come along and feed him out of a silver mug, and tuck him up in a pink crib, with a woolly baa lamb beside him, huh? Say, ain't you got any sense at all?

WOODSY BOY. Do you mean, when we go away, he will be left alone?

THOMAS. My daddy is coming back pretty soon. He said he would. [*Goes back into the shed.*]

WOODSY BOY. Where d'you suppose his daddy's gone?

FIRST SOLDIER. If you shin that wall, you'll see a clump of trees over yonder. Daddy's there. "Rock-a-bye baby, on the tree-top." With the rope that tethered one of his own cows tied round his neck.

WOODSY BOY. What for?

FIRST SOLDIER. Just sniping. Got two of ours before we settled his hash. That was a bit o' the fun you weren't in on, Greeny.

[*The Adjutant, rolling himself a cigarette, chances to look up. First Soldier withdraws to the left of the gateway.*]

WOODSY BOY [*to Thomas, fumbling in his pocket*]. Here! That is chocolate. Extra ration. It's good. Eat it.

[*Thomas snatches the chocolate and runs back into the shed.*]

SERGEANT. Commissary on the line, sir.

ADJUTANT [*rising*]. *Hold it!* [*Goes to house door.*] Colonel! Ready the commissary.

[*Robert comes in from the house.*]

ROBERT [*to the Major*]. Fooled me that time, old man. [*Gives back the flask.*] Not enough to drown a flea. Well?

ADJUTANT. Commissary, sir.

ROBERT. Right! [*Goes to telephone.*] Hello, Commissary! Where in hell are those supplies? Can't live on air, you know. Can't suck our paws like blasted bears.— Well, I don't give a damn! We've been entrenching for forty-eight hours. Not a blamed thing to

eat but the bread in our haversacks, and a little beef on the hoof.— What's that? — Well, that's more like it.— Hold on! I say! You're sending us some brandy, too, eh? [*The Major and the Adjutant exchange glances.*] Need it badly. Got some cases of sickness. All right. So long. [*Turns to the Adjutant.*] Four motor-trucks will be at the foot of the lane, any minute. See that the commissary sergeant is on the job.

ADJUTANT. Right, sir.

ROBERT. I say! [*Detaining him.*] Look out yourself for that stuff consigned to me. It's important.

ADJUTANT. Yes, sir.

[*The Adjutant goes out through the gateway.*]

ROBERT [*at the back of the table*]. Well! What writing?

MAJOR. Just a line home.

ROBERT. That's a nice thing to have, a home. Those chaps didn't happen to leave me mine.

SERGEANT. Outpost K is calling, sir.

ROBERT. Eh?

SERGEANT. Yes. This is Crossways. What? — They got that biplane, sir.

[*Major turns alertly.*]

ROBERT [*excited*]. No!

SERGEANT. Smashed the pilot to bits. Mixed the other fellow up with red-hot petrol.

ROBERT. Can talk, can't he?

SERGEANT. Can he talk? — Yes. He can talk, sir.

ROBERT. Send him over here.

SERGEANT. The Colonel says: Send him over! — Is that all, sir?

ROBERT. That's all, Sergeant. [*Goes to centre of the courtyard, to the Woodsy Boy.*] Come here, you!

WOODSY BOY [*coming to him, saluting*]. Yes, sir.

ROBERT. You're the man saw the biplane go westward night before last?

WOODSY BOY. Yes, sir.

ROBERT. Why in hell couldn't you have given the alarm?

WOODSY BOY. I thought 'twas just a big bird, sir.

ROBERT. Well, when birdie dropped a bomb, down in the field where our men happened to be sleeping, you woke up and took a little notice, maybe?

WOODSY BOY. Yes, sir. [*Shuddering.*] I heard 'em scream.

ROBERT. Did you see a light on the hill beyond?

WOODSY BOY. Plain as I see you, sir.

ROBERT. And a light far off as you could see, there in the west?

WOODSY BOY. Yes, sir.

ROBERT [*to the Major*]. That's our water tower. Birdie just missed it. [*To Woodsy Boy.*] That's all! [*The Woodsy Boy salutes and returns to his post. Robert sits on the bench in front of the table.*] There's been too many lights on the hills. Too many camp fires by day. To-night I'm counting on finding out the name and address of the folks that are setting those fires.

MAJOR. You think you'll get that from the aviator?

ROBERT. Why not? St. Jo's reported that he landed inside our lines, didn't they? Reported that he stocked up with petrol, didn't they?

MAJOR. Yes.

ROBERT. Well, then! He's likely to know where he got the petrol and who helped him. When we get one man, we get the next, and so on, till we get the whole damned gang.

MAJOR. The country is rotten with treachery.

ROBERT. And there's a real enemy in front. Don't forget that! We're not out of the woods yet. And it will help things along to clear out some of the snake-weed and skunk cabbage. When I get hold of that biplane chap, he's going to squeal.

MAJOR. Well — there are — er — rules of the game.

ROBERT. Not a hunting man, are you, old chap?

MAJOR. No.

ROBERT. If you were, you'd know there aren't any rules when you're dealing with vermin. Let me once get hold of the fellow who dropped the bombs into St. Jo's —

[*As he is speaking the Adjutant comes in through the gateway, followed by Katherine. She wears the dusty and rather shabby dress of a Red Cross nurse, with cloak and bonnet.*]

ADJUTANT [*saluting*]. A lady, sir, that wants to see you.

ROBERT. A lady? Here? You're off your head. How'd she get here?

ADJUTANT. Red Cross nurse, with a pass from Headquarters. Came on the commissary truck.

ROBERT [*rising*]. Well, put her on the truck and send her back where she came from.

KATHERINE. Oh, please, no! Let me stay long enough to say — How are you, Rob? [*Goes to him.*]

ROBERT [*embracing her*]. Kate! How in God's name did you get here?

[*The Major and the Adjutant fall back a little.*]

KATHERINE. A little eager, perhaps, to see you. It's been months and months now, and — and a good deal has happened, Rob.

ROBERT. Yes. I know. Sit down here, come. [*Seats her on the bench.*] Pity we haven't some brandy! Major, my wife. My Adjutant.

[*The two officers bow and retire to the back of the courtyard.*]

ROBERT. We must fix it to send you back to the base. This is the last place — You know we may be attacked before morning. What ever possessed you —

KATHERINE. I got into St. Jo's last night.

ROBERT. The devil you did! Then you were —

KATHERINE. Rob! Don't talk about it, please. I thought I was hardened to every horror, but —

ROBERT [*sitting beside her*]. There, there!

KATHERINE. Well, I came on to Headquarters this morning. They're trying to get me a pass to go through the lines, and meantime, when I found you were stationed here — the chance to see you — I haven't much else left.

ROBERT. You shouldn't have taken the risk.

KATHERINE. I've been running risks, such as they are, for four months now.

ROBERT. You shouldn't have started on this fool's errand. You ought to be at home.

KATHERINE. There is no — home, Rob. So I started out to see if I couldn't find some trace of Basil.

ROBERT. Just waste of time. Poor kid! We shan't see him this side of Jordan.

KATHERINE. Don't say that, please! If you could see your mother! If you could hear her, night and day, crying for her boy. I can understand.

ROBERT. Yes. I know. Our boy — Did he suffer much, Kate?

KATHERINE. Not for long.

ROBERT. Did he speak of me?

KATHERINE. Yes. He cried for you.

ROBERT. Poor little kid! Poor old girl!

KATHERINE. Better not, Rob. I mustn't cry here.

ROBERT. No. It's over and done with now. [*Rises.*] Can't help him.

KATHERINE. It wasn't for my boy alone. [*Rises.*] Just the comfort — to find you again. To have you, just the same, to cling to, when the whole world reels. [*Robert embraces her.*]

[*Second Soldier enters through the gateway.*]

ADJUTANT [*approaching Robert*]. Beg pardon, sir.

ROBERT. Well?

ADJUTANT. Seven o'clock, sir.

ROBERT. Yes. Must go the rounds. We're a bit short of officers, you know. [*To Soldier.*] Got my horse there?

SECOND SOLDIER. Yes, sir.

ROBERT. Be back soon, Kate. We shan't be sending away the trucks for half an hour. We'll have a minute together yet. Ready, gentlemen!

[*Robert, the Major, the Adjutant, and Second Soldier go out through the gateway. Thomas steals from the shed and stands watching them. The shadows are deepening. Katherine watches Robert off. Then her eyes fall upon Thomas. Her arms go out toward him yearningly.*]

KATHERINE. What's your name, dear?

THOMAS. Thomas.

KATHERINE [*sitting on the bench*]. And whose boy are you?

THOMAS [*shyly approaching her*]. Daddy's.

KATHERINE. And where's Daddy?

THOMAS. He's coming back. He told me to wait.

KATHERINE. When did you wash your poor little face last? Are you hungry?

THOMAS. Yes.

KATHERINE. I have some biscuit in my pocket. If you'll let me wash your face — yes?

THOMAS. What kind o' biscuit?

KATHERINE [*pouring water from the mug upon her handkerchief*]. Oh, round ones and square ones and some of them sweet. [*Washes his face.*] My stars! What a smudgy little boy! Where's Mammy?

THOMAS. Mammy died, three, four, five — oh, a lot of days ago. And the little baby. The little weeny baby — so long. [*Measures with his hands.*] Daddy put them out there in the ground. I wish Daddy would come.

KATHERINE. Don't cry, dear! Don't! [*Takes him on her lap.*] Play I'm your mammy. Here are the biscuit! All for you!

[*Thomas eats the biscuit eagerly.*]

SERGEANT [*answering call*]. Crossways, yes, sir. Ready! [*Takes down the message.*] Airscout reports enemy massing in force, three regiments of foot estimated, behind the lines, opposite Crossways. Right. Got it, yes. Good-bye. [*Snaps fingers.*]

FIRST SOLDIER [*going to him*]. Yes, sir.

SERGEANT. Take this to the Colonel. [*Gives him the written message.*]

FIRST SOLDIER. Yes, sir.

[*First Soldier goes out through the gateway.*]

SERGEANT. Snappy time round here to-night, young fellow.

WOODSY BOY [*coming a little toward him*]. Must we kill them some more, sir?

SERGEANT. Well, what d'ye think you're here for? Didn't think 'twas a sworry, did you, with swallow-tails and pink tea? My God! The stuff they've sent us since the Conscript Act! Lucky for you, young chap, I'm on the wire, 'stead o' teaching you the drill. [*Busies himself with copying duplicate messages into his book.*]

THOMAS. Are you a little boy's mother?

KATHERINE. Yes, dear.

THOMAS. Where is he?

KATHERINE [*after a moment*]. In a pleasant place. Where men have stopped killing each other. Where women don't have to cry any more. Where little children are safe and happy. Oh, he's better off where he is! Better off! [*Controls herself.*] Your mammy is there, too, dear. Safe and happy. And the wee little baby.

THOMAS. Oh, no. Daddy put them there in the ground. I wish he'd come. I want him so.

KATHERINE. Don't cry. You must be a brave little boy. Cuddle close and go to sleep.

[*She holds the child close. He shuts his eyes. Twilight is deepening. The Woodsy Boy, who has watched her with the eyes of a lost dog, steals to her side.*]

WOODSY BOY. Lady! You don't remember me?

KATHERINE. I'm sorry. No.

WOODSY BOY. I came to your place one night, with a dog that had broke its leg.

KATHERINE. Not the Woodsy Boy?

WOODSY BOY. I showed you where to find the primroses, you and Roland.

KATHERINE. Oh, what are you doing here?

WOODSY BOY. I was tall enough and old enough, they said.

KATHERINE. A conscript, of course! You poor little fellow, they might have let you be.

THOMAS [*in his sleep*]. Daddy!

KATHERINE. Hush! Hush!

WOODSY BOY. We have killed his daddy. He fired at us. We were taking his cattle.

KATHERINE. God pity us all!

WOODSY BOY. At home my father stole a sheep. He was two years in jail. Here we stole his father's cattle — so we hanged his father on a tree. I don't understand.

KATHERINE. Just do as they tell you, Heaven pity you!

WOODSY BOY. At home the Parson told me not to kill. He said God said we mustn't. But here they say I must kill.

KATHERINE. Don't try to understand!

SERGEANT. Hi you! Greeny! Cut into the house and fetch some lanterns! [*The Woodsy Boy goes into the house.*] Was he bothering you, ma'am?

KATHERINE. No, Sergeant.

SERGEANT. He's a bit cracked in the head, you can

see. Not much like the chaps they sent us, first of the war. Kind of petering out, they are.

[*Through the gateway come in Robert, the Major, the Adjutant, and Second Soldier.*]

ROBERT. Any report, Sergeant?

SERGEANT. Just the airscout, sir.

ROBERT. Take that ladder! Set it up against the shed. [*Second Soldier sets ladder against the shed. The Woodsy Boy comes from the house with two lighted lanterns. He hangs one on the porch, so that the light falls across the table.*] Let's have the binoculars. [*Takes them from the Adjutant.*] Here! Climb up there. Look out for lights on the hills. Flashes. [*Second Soldier goes up the ladder, hooks his elbows on roof of the shed, and studies the horizon at right. The Woodsy Boy sets the second lantern on the telephone table.*] Late with that prisoner froom Outpost K.

ADJUTANT. Believe I hear the motor now, sir.

ROBERT. Well, bring him on the run. We've no time to fool. [*The Adjutant goes through the gateway. Robert turns to Katherine, and sees her, under the lanternlight, with the child in her arms. He cries out.*] Kate!

KATHERINE. Don't wake him!

ROBERT. Good God! For half a minute I thought — [*Goes to her, furious with himself.*] What kid is that you've got there?

KATHERINE. Isn't there a bed inside where I can lay him? Poor little fellow!

ROBERT. This is the battle-line. Not much room here for sentiment.

KATHERINE. It's his father's house.

ROBERT. Well, put him on the bed, if you want to. [*Katherine leads the half sleeping child to the house.*] Better stay inside yourself. Turns cool here after sunset. Can't send you back for an hour yet. Go in! Go in! [*Katherine and Thomas go into the house.*

Robert, badly shaken, takes up the mug, dashes out the water that is in it, fills it from his pocket flask, and takes a stiff drink of whiskey neat. The Adjutant comes in. Robert turns at his step.] Got him?

ADJUTANT. We have, sir.

ROBERT. Well, trot him out.

[*The Adjutant signals with his hand from the gateway. An infantry Sergeant comes in, followed by several soldiers. Two of them are half supporting, half dragging Phil, incredibly altered. He wears the scorched and torn remains of an aviation lieutenant's uniform. He is bareheaded and his forehead and eyes are covered with a blood-stained emergency bandage. He is further disguised by a fortnight's growth of beard. His wrists are closely tied. Not incomprehensible that Robert, two thirds drunk, should fail to recognize in this soiled and broken wreck the man who should have been his brother-in-law. Not incomprehensible either that Phil, blinded, and with senses benumbed with pain, should fail to recognize in the whiskey voice the voice of his old friend.*]

SECOND SERGEANT. The aviator, sir, that ran the biplane over St. Jo's.

ROBERT. Set him down there! [*The soldiers thrust Phil down on the stool at the right of the table, and then draw back.*] So you're the chap that paid us a visit last night.

PHIL [*desperately trying to hold himself together*]. Yes.

ROBERT [*sitting at left of the table, opposite him*]. D'ye know what you did at St. Jo's?

PHIL. Yes.

ROBERT. It was a job to be proud of, eh?

PHIL. Yes. We got your train-yard — your rolling-stock — locomotives — repair shop.

ROBERT. Is that all?

PHIL. Do you want more? Well — maybe some of

our chaps come again. I can't. [*Drops head on his arms on the table.*] Done for!

MAJOR [*at the back of the table*]. See here! Don't you know what you —

ROBERT. Shut up! Shut up! Is he shamming, Sergeant, or is he badly hurt?

SECOND SERGEANT. Pretty well shaken up, sir, and a couple of ribs bust in. Then the tank blew up and he got it in the face. His eyes are done for.

PHIL. Yes.

SECOND SERGEANT. He was pretty keen on killing himself. That's why we tied him.

PHIL [*lifting his head*]. I get out of it pretty quick anyhow. But it's no fun waiting. I — [*With his hands outstretched, to Robert.*] Oh, for God's sake! Let me have some morphine! So for a minute it stops hurting. So I don't go crazy. Maybe you'll be up against it once yourself. For God's sake! [*Drops his head on his arms.*] For God's sake!

ROBERT. Bad as all that, is it? Well, you shall have your morphine, sonny.

PHIL [*piteously*]. Thank you!

ROBERT. But first you're going to do something for us, eh?

PHIL [*lifting his head*]. What do you want?

ROBERT. The names of the fellows inside our lines that are standing in with you.

PHIL. I don't know them.

ROBERT. Oh, yes, you do. Come on now! Who were they? Then it's you to the hospital. Not before.

PHIL. Say, you said it was a soldier you were taking me to. This is nothing but a fat civilian, with his dinner slobbered all over his waistcoat. You damned bastard, do you think I'd —

[*Robert springs up and starts toward Phil. The Major intercepts him.*]

MAJOR. Go easy, sir.

ROBERT [*controlling himself*]. Think you can get me mad enough to hit a blow might kill you, do you? [*Standing over Phil.*] Not a bit of it. [*Strikes him.*] Shell out now! Who were they?

PHIL. No! [*With a suppressed groan.*] Oh!

ROBERT. Pretty fierce the pain, eh? [*Sitting on the table, beside Phil.*] Think how jolly good you're going to feel, with something better than an emergency bandage over your eyes, dropping off to sleep —

PHIL. No.

ROBERT. Regular little hero, aren't you? Well, I guess we'd better tell you just how much of a hero you really are. Didn't know perhaps that there was a train made up and ready to start at daybreak, in the train-yard at St. Jo's.

PHIL. What of it?

ROBERT. Not much of it, after your bombs smashed into it. [*Phil gives a short and savage laugh.*] Just before then it was full up with wounded men — three hundred of them — and half of them your own chaps.

PHIL. No! You're saying that to torture me. You're lying. All of you. If I could only see your faces, I'd know you were lying.

ROBERT [*rising*]. Well, we're going to send you where you'll find out whether it's the truth or not. [*Takes pad, and writes while he speaks.*] We'd be well within our rights to hang you, you damned air-pirate. But we'll stand you up against the wall instead.

PHIL. I thank you.

ROBERT. Set him up there! [*Two soldiers take Phil and thrust him against the wall at the right of the gateway. Meantime Robert beckons the Second Sergeant, and shows him the written paper. The Sergeant takes the paper and by the light of his electric bull's eye shows it to the soldiers of his squad successively. Meantime Robert goes on speaking.*] Back him up against the wall. More to the right. Here you, fetch that lan-

tern. Hang it on that peg beside his head. [*The Woodsy Boy, shrinking, takes the lantern from the telephone table, and hangs it on the wall, where the light falls squarely on Phil's ghastly face. This done, he darts back into the shelter of the shed, where he remains throughout a horrified and fascinated witness.*] Got anything to say?

PHIL. Be quick. That's all.

ROBERT. We'll let you give the word to the firing squad.

PHIL. Yes.

ROBERT. Sergeant!

SECOND SERGEANT. Fall in! 'Tention! March! 'Bout face! Ready! Aim! All ready, sir.

[*The firing squad is drawn up, behind the table, facing Phil. The Second Sergeant falls back at the right.*]

ROBERT. How about it now? Going to give us those names?

PHIL. No.

ROBERT. You'll find out in a minute how they died, those three hundred at St. Jo's. You'll be with them.

PHIL. I'll chance it.

ROBERT. Want to pray?

PHIL. Get through with it.

ROBERT. Give the word, then!

[*Katherine, without her cloak and bonnet, comes from the house, and pauses on the porch. She does not of course recognize Phil. Neither does she go into hysterics. She is a sensible woman, and no novice at the sight of horrors. She does, however, stand frozen in her tracks and takes in all that follows. On Robert's last word, Phil pulls himself up to his full height, with chin uplifted. Obviously he is using the last remnant of his strength of body and of soul to hold him through the next moment.*]

PHIL. Fire! [*A moment's ghastly silence.*] For God's sake, fire!

ROBERT. Fall out!

[*The soldiers break ranks and stand beneath the tree.*]

PHIL [*going to pieces*]. What are you doing? What are you going to do? Why don't you fire?

ROBERT [*going to him*]. Thought we'd let you off easy as that, eh? Not a bit of it!

PHIL. You devils! You devils! Oh! I can't bear any more! I can't bear it! [*Starts to beat his head against the wall.*]

ROBERT [*catching him by the shoulder*]. Cut that out! [*Flings him away from the wall.*]

PHIL [*falling full length, face down.*] O God! Haven't you any pity!

ROBERT [*over him*]. You wasted a lot of strength, striking attitudes there. Come on now, laddie! [*Kicks him.*] Be sensible! Give us those names.

PHIL. No!

SECOND SOLDIER. Colonel! A light, sir.

ROBERT. Where?

[*Through the ensuing, Phil drags himself toward the table, strikes his head against the stool, and, having thus placed himself, staggers to his feet.*]

SECOND SOLDIER. On the wooded hill. Flash, sir. There it comes again. [*The crash of a gun is heard. A branch falls from the tree into the courtyard.*] Got our range, sir!

ROBERT [*catching Phil by the shoulders as he rises*]. They're getting busy, your friends. Think they're going to keep on dropping my chaps, just because you keep your damned mouth shut? [*Thrusts Phil, struggling hopelessly, down on the stool at the right of the table.*] I'll pry your jaws open. Won't speak, eh?

PHIL [*struggling*]. My God, man! Don't! Don't!

ROBERT. Give us those names!

PHIL. No! No!

ROBERT [*jerking Phil's arms from before his face*]. Damn your soul! [*Forces his head back upon the ta-*

ble]. If I get my hand on your face, you'll tell in a hurry!

PHIL [*shrieking*]. Christ!

KATHERINE [*somehow arrived at the table, clutching Robert's arm*]. Rob! Stop! Stop!

ROBERT. How'd you get here, Kate? What are you doing?

KATHERINE. For your own sake, stop!

[*Guns intermittently crash throughout.*]

ROBERT. Hear that? Pounding us to bits, just because he won't talk. Get into the house, Kate. This is my job.

KATHERINE. Not torture! Rob! Rob! No!

ROBERT. You're my wife, aren't you? Do as I tell you, Kate.

[*The familiar names and the woman's well remembered voice have reached even Phil's pain-crazed senses.*]

PHIL. Kate! Kate!

[*Robert, for the instant dismayed by the horror of the possibility suggested, goes back from his victim. Phil staggers blindly to his feet.*]

PHIL. Don't leave me! Don't you know me? I'm Phil.

KATHERINE [*catching him in her arms as he pitches forward*]. No! No! [*She eases him down on the bench, scanning what little of his face is visible.*]

PHIL. The house in the north — Roland — Gertrude —

KATHERINE. Oh! What have you done, Rob? It's Phil — Phil that saved our boy!

ROBERT. Yes. For his countrymen to butcher. Get away from him!

KATHERINE [*supporting Phil, with her arms about him*]. No. You're not going to touch him.

ROBERT. You were at St. Jo's yourself this morning. You saw what they were bringing out of that train-yard. That's his work.

KATHERINE [*drawing back from Phil involuntarily*]. You did that?

PHIL [*with a despairing cry*]. Then it's true!

KATHERINE. God forgive you!

[*Phil sways forward, half lying on the bench.*]

SERGEANT. Airscout, sir.

ROBERT. Eh?

[*Katherine snatches up the mug and fills it at the water-bucket.*]

SERGEANT. Report from Outpost K. The enemy's foot are advancing against our trenches.

ROBERT [*to Adjutant*]. Got your horse ready?

ADJUTANT. There, sir. [*Indicating gateway.*]

ROBERT. Hurry up those re-enforcements. Ride like hell.

[*The Adjutant hurries out through the gateway. Robert follows after him, with the soldiers in attendance, all but the Woodsy Boy, Second Soldier, and the two Sergeants.*]

KATHERINE [*at Phil's side*]. Drink it, Phil!

PHIL [*drinking hurriedly*]. You have not gone away? You have not left me?

KATHERINE. No. [*Sets the mug on the table.*]

PHIL. It was the repair shop I aimed at. I didn't mean —They suffered? Tell me! Tell me!

KATHERINE. Some of them, yes.

PHIL. I thought once — I was going to help put a stop to pain. I thought — Will you tell her, please, I am not any more a coward! With my own hands — three hundred cripples killed. She should be proud. Say that!

[*Robert comes in through the gateway.*]

ROBERT [*to the Major*]. Bring up our own regiment. On the double!

[*The Major hurries out through the gateway. Robert turns toward Phil. Katherine steps quickly between them, with her arm about Phil.*]

ROBERT. That's nonsense, Kate. You can't stop me. [*To Phil.*] I'll see you again in a minute, and when I do — by God! you'll talk! [*To the Second Sergeant.*] Sergeant! Keep an eye on that chap. We're not through with him by a long shot. Come on, you!

[*Robert goes out by the lane at the right, followed by the telephone Sergeant. The Second Sergeant draws back and paces in the gateway.*]

PHIL. Katherine! Will you do for me one thing? Inside my coat here, sewn in the lining — I can't get at it — some stuff will make me sleep. Won't you please get it for me? I'd have done it for you. I'd have done it for Rob.

KATHERINE. Don't! I can't bear that. Because I believe you would.

PHIL. Then won't you please — I don't want to lie screaming on the ground. In a minute I will. O God! Let up on me! Please, please, Katherine! For Roland's sake!

KATHERINE. Hush! Oh hush! [*Gets the tablets from inside his coat.*] Here, is it?

PHIL. You have it?

KATHERINE. Yes.

PHIL. Put it please into some water. Let me drink it quick.

KATHERINE. Phil! My poor old chap! What is it?

PHIL. To make me sleep.

KATHERINE. For how long?

PHIL. Don't ask questions. Give it to me, and then go straight away.

KATHERINE. I can't. Oh, I can't!

PHIL. Give it to me! Three hundred of them — helpless! But I must not tell. I must not give up those names. I must have something left, or I'll be scared to die. Katherine! Help me not to tell! Katherine! I am here in hell — and blind — blind! Katherine! Katherine!

KATHERINE [*snatching up the mug, and putting into it the tablets*]. Phil! Drink it! [*Thrusts the mug into his hands.*]

PHIL [*drinking*]. God bless you!

KATHERINE [*putting down the mug, bending over him*]. Phil, dear! Can you pray?

PHIL Pray?

KATHERINE. Before you — go to sleep?

PHIL. Oh, yes. Pray — Roland — [*With her arms about him he slips from the bench to his knees.*] Katherine!

KATHERINE. Yes. I'm here. I'm here.

PHIL. Now I lay me — keep me kind — make me — a good — boy —

[*The death spasm grips him. His head goes back. His kneeling body stiffens. He collapses limply at her feet. She stands rigid and speechless, gazing down at him. The guns now are almost incessant.*]

MAJOR [*outside*]. Battalion, forward!

A CAPTAIN'S VOICE. Forward!

SECOND SERGEANT. Fall in!

[*Second Soldier comes down the ladder and goes out at the gateway. The Major comes in. At the same moment Robert comes from the lane.*]

MAJOR. All ready, sir.

[*Troops of infantry are seen marching toward right along the road beyond the gateway. The Major takes his place among them. The Second Sergeant falls in.*]

ROBERT [*to Woodsy Boy*]. Fall in!

WOODSY BOY [*as unexpectedly as if a sparrow should chirp in the face of a tornado*]. No, no! I won't kill them. [*Lets his rifle fall.*]

ROBERT. Pick up that rifle.

WOODSY BOY. No! No! No!

ROBERT [*drawing his revolver*]. Fall in, damn you!

WOODSY BOY. I won't kill. God said that —

[*Robert shoots him in the breast. The Woodsy Boy*

staggers a few steps forward and falls dead. Across his body Robert goes out at the gateway and joins the marching troops. There is the flash of a shell, and a crash. A section of the wall at the right is blown inward. Katherine staggers back, but the clutch of the little boy, Thomas, roused by the noise and stolen in terror from the house, brings her to herself. She holds the child to her, protecting, covering his ears and eyes. The bursting of shells is now incessant. Another section of wall goes down. Through the smoke and the dust of the roadway, under the bursting shells, a horse battery is seen going into action.]

CURTAIN

EPILOGUE

In the two years that have passed since the events of the Prologue, the country-house has been in the hands of the enemy. The wide open doorway and the uncurtained casements show springtide country, with stumps of fruit-trees, trampled fields, and, in the distance, the burned rafters of a hamlet and the gaunt tower of a ruined church. Within, the room has been stripped bare of all that made it livable, hangings, rugs, cushions, pictures, bric-a-brac. The good and heavy furniture has been replaced with plain and cheap articles. At the left is a deal table, on which stand a lamp with a green shade, of ordinary pattern, and an earthen jug with a few sprays of lilac. A wooden chair is beside the table. At the centre is a plain table, on which is a big basket of coarse mending. At either side of the table is a rush-bottom chair. A cottage settle is at right angles to the hearth. Beside the hearth is a wheel-chair, and near by a wooden chair.

The season is May, eight months after the events upon the battle-line. The time is late afternoon.

On the bench in the bow-window Thomas, neatly but poorly clad, sits with a shabby little picture book. Near by the Professor, aged, shabby, and almost senile, is irritably looking from the window. Lydia, gaunt and aged, all in black, sits mending at the right of the table. In the wheel-chair, with a rug across his knees, sits Basil, the haggard wreck of the boy who meant to end the war in six weeks.

PROFESSOR. Dear, dear! Katherine is very late with the mail.

LYDIA. Well, Kate can't go like a race-horse, you might remember. She's tired, poor girl! And no wonder, with all that she has to do.

PROFESSOR. But at such a time it is most exasperating not to have the paper promptly.

BASIL. Probably Kate ducked in somewhere when that shower came up.

THOMAS [*going to Lydia*]. Can I go down the lane and meet Aunt Katherine?

LYDIA. Yes, Thomas. But mind you don't go near the soldiers' camp.

THOMAS. No, I won't.

[*Thomas runs out at the terrace door.*]

LYDIA. That camp is enough to demoralize all the boys and girls in the district. What there is about brass buttons and a bugle —

BASIL. Oh, come, Mother! Our chaps are decent enough fellows.

LYDIA. Well, I'll be thankful when their camp is broken up. They demobilize next week, didn't you say?

BASIL. They were planning to. But there's no telling what will happen with these new complications.

LYDIA. Fiddlesticks! You needn't tell me that we're going to fight again. We've got peace at last, haven't we? We've got the victory, haven't we?

BASIL. I wonder. If we have, I don't think much of what they call the fruits of victory.

LYDIA. Fruits of victory! I don't see much of them in this house.

[*Gertrude, in shabby black clothes, white, sullen, and weary, comes in at the left.*]

GERTRUDE. That last shower did the business. The kitchen roof is leaking like a sieve. Give me the mending, Mother.

LYDIA. There's enough for two. Shoddy stuff they sell us nowadays.

GERTRUDE. [*Sits left of table, with mending.*] There's a half day's work to do on that roof. We need an able-bodied man — and the money to pay him.

LYDIA. Well, Robert will be home very soon now. And when he takes hold of things —

GERTRUDE. We can't do much without ready money. And every penny is eaten up with the new taxes.

PROFESSOR. It is entirely the fault of the ministry. They should have stood out for a proper war indemnity. They should have made the foreigners pay for all our losses.

BASIL. And what the devil were the foreigners to pay with? I tell you, they're worse off than we are.

LYDIA [*going to sit on the settle near Basil*]. O sonny, how can that be possible?

PROFESSOR. Well, well! Here's Kate at last. And high time, I should think.

[*Katherine comes in with Thomas at the terrace door. She wears a plain and inexpensive walking suit, hat, and blouse. She looks older by ten years.*]

PROFESSOR. You are late, Katherine.

[*Thomas gives the Professor a newspaper, which the old man eagerly spreads open.*]

KATHERINE. I'm sorry, Uncle. The road was a bit heavy. Here's a letter for you, Trudie!

GERTRUDE. Why, it's from Margaret. It's months since we've had a word from her.

BASIL. Give us a look-in, Uncle.

PROFESSOR. Most annoying! [*Going to Basil.*] Only one penny paper a day, and at a crisis like this — a national crisis. [*Sits on the chair beside Basil and shares the paper with him.*]

THOMAS. Aunt Katherine! Can I go out and play a little?

KATHERINE. Yes, dear. Stay in the garden, remember. [*Puts her hat and coat in the closet.*]

THOMAS. Yes, I will.

[*Thomas goes out at the terrace door.*]

BASIL. Well, it looks squally, all right.

GERTRUDE. Bad news, Basil?

PROFESSOR. At least we are in better shape than we were two years ago. We have an efficient army of seasoned men.

BASIL. Seasoned like me, eh?

LYDIA. We're not going to fight again?

KATHERINE. It's nothing but talk, Mother. [*Sits right of table, takes mending.*]

BASIL. We have cause enough to fight, and don't you forget it.

PROFESSOR. Yes. The conduct of our late associates in arms has violated every usage of international law.

BASIL. We'll teach 'em a thing or two. And we've got those that will help us.

KATHERINE. You don't really think we'll fight against our old comrades?

PROFESSOR. In the shift of events that is not altogether impossible.

LYDIA. You mean we'll actually fight now on the side of the foreigners? Ignorant wretches!

BASIL. Oh, they're not half bad, Mother. Really they're much more our sort than our old associates. They were mighty decent to me, you know, when I was off my head, before Kate found me.

PROFESSOR. The foreigners are not the worst of people, Lydia. Philip now, he was a quite likable young man.

[*Gertrude listens tensely.*]

BASIL. He wasn't a half bad sort, old Phil.

PROFESSOR [*turning to his paper*]. Killed in action, didn't you say, Kate?

KATHERINE [*rising*]. Yes. He was killed in a raid at St. Jo's. Instantly killed. [*Goes to the window at right.*]

LYDIA. Poor fellow! At least it's a comfort to think that he did not suffer. You have that to remember, Gertrude.

GERTRUDE. Oh, yes! I remember. [*Rises and goes with her letter into the bow-window.*]

BASIL. Poor old Phil!

PROFESSOR [*reading the paper*]. Tut, tut! Shocking! Most shocking!

BASIL. Let's see, sir. [*Glancing at the paper.*] Ah, that's rotten!

LYDIA. What is it?

BASIL. Getting nasty, our late comrades in arms. Women of ours have been attacked among them. Oh, I say! Little children — butchered!

KATHERINE. Basil! Two years ago, those are the same stories they told about Phil's countrymen.

GERTRUDE. Here's interesting news. Margaret is to be married.

KATHERINE. Not Margaret — Hush!

[*Lydia lays a hand on Basil's arm.*]

BASIL. It doesn't matter. Who waits for a man as good as dead?

GERTRUDE. She can forget. There are such women. Isn't she lucky? [*Turns to the door.*]

LYDIA. Where are you going?

GERTRUDE. Out where the garden used to be.

[*Gertrude goes out at the terrace door.*]

LYDIA [*rising*]. Perhaps I'd better follow her. It's the old folks have to tend upon the young folks now.

[*Lydia goes out at the terrace door.*]

BASIL. You can have the paper, sir.

PROFESSOR. Yes, yes. [*Hurries toward the chair at the left.*] The editorials — their comments are too mild. They do not understand the principles our late associ-

ates have shamelessly violated. [*Sits at the left and buries himself in the coveted paper.*]

KATHERINE [*laying her hand on Basil's arm*]. Old man!

BASIL [*sharply*]. If you don't mind letting me alone! I beg your pardon, Kate. About all I can do now is to bite on the bullet — gracefully, and keep on biting for a little matter of forty or fifty years.

KATHERINE. Doctors don't know everything. Perhaps —

BASIL. They know enough to know I'm tied to this chair till death do us part. That's in the marriage service, isn't it? [*Breaking down.*] Ah!

KATHERINE. Basil! Don't! Don't!

LYDIA [*outside, excitedly*]. Kate! O Kate!

KATHERINE. Mother! What's wrong?

[*Lydia hurries in at the terrace door.*]

LYDIA. Kate! Here's Rob come home this very day. Here's Rob come home at last. I told you — I kept telling you — they couldn't fight again. Now we've got Rob back. It's all right. It's all right. Come in, Rob! Come in!

[*Robert, noticeably aged, in civilian clothes, appears at the terrace door. He has the look of a man who has just been struck in the face. Lydia hurries down to the Professor, who rises.*]

ROBERT. I — I hardly recognized the house. Kate!

KATHERINE [*going to his arms*]. You've come back to stay, Rob? You're not in uniform. Oh, I was afraid —

ROBERT [*looking about the dismantled room*]. They did a pretty thorough job here, didn't they?

KATHERINE. You'll get used to it, Rob. We're all getting used to it.

ROBERT [*in the doorway*]. Cleaned out the orchards, didn't they? All fruit trees, those were. Just got 'em in condition to bear.

KATHERINE. I wrote you how things were.

ROBERT. Yes. I didn't quite take it in. [*Starts toward the hearth, stops, smitten at the sight of Basil, then goes to him.*] Hello, Bub! Hard luck, old man! [*Gertrude appears in the doorway, unnoticed by Robert*]. Cleaned us up here pretty well, the foreigners, didn't they? Cleaned us up, while we were getting ready to fight! And now we're turning out to help 'em thrash our old comrades in arms.

KATHERINE. What!

ROBERT. War was declared at noon to-day.

KATHERINE. War was declared!

ROBERT [*going to the Professor*]. Here's a late paper, sir.

PROFESSOR. Thank you, Robert, thank you! [*Retires into the bow-window, where he reads the paper, oblivious of all else.*]

LYDIA. They're going to keep on fighting! [*Goes to Basil, sits on the settle.*]

KATHERINE. But you've come home.

ROBERT. Yes. They only want able-bodied men for cannon fodder — young men, strong men, not chaps like me. Knocked my heart out in the service. Got rheumatism in those damned trenches. That's why they gave me my walking ticket. That's why I've come home.

KATHERINE. And now we fight for the foreigners. I can't believe it.

GERTRUDE [*coming into the room*]. Phil would have been useful now. A pity, isn't it, Rob, that you murdered him.

ROBERT. Trudie! What do you mean?

GERTRUDE. Ask Kate!

KATHERINE. Gertrude!

ROBERT. You talked?

LYDIA. You shan't blame Kate. She found my boy. She brought him home.

ROBERT. You talked, Kate?

GERTRUDE. In her sleep. I know what you did to him. I'm glad you've come here. At every turn of the stair — in every room of this house that was home to him — you'll see Phil now, as I see him, all the days of your life.

ROBERT. Kate! In your sleep — you remembered like that?

KATHERINE. I can't forget. I can't forget.

ROBERT. I'd been drinking.

KATHERINE. Don't! Don't! I know.

ROBERT. You don't understand. You've got to understand. In the trenches that winter, with the dirty water at our knees. Days on end, weeks on end, months on end. Always cold. Always wet. Vermin crawling over us. Dogs' food that we snatched like dogs. And all the time the guns were pounding, pounding, pounding, and we shouted to be heard, and our ear-drums were cracking. We turned up the filth and slime to bury our dead, and we came on the rotting dead they'd laid there —

KATHERINE. Don't! Don't!

ROBERT. Well, I got to depending on the stuff. It deadened things. But I never went drunk to bed till the night I got your letter — the letter about Roland.

KATHERINE. I'm not blaming you. [*Sinking on chair, at the right of the table*]. God help us all!

ROBERT. Can't you understand, Trudie? I was half drunk that night when Phil — No! I don't mean that. All that I did was right.

GERTRUDE. Your friend! He was your friend!

ROBERT. I don't carry my friendships onto the firing line. He was nothing to me, that chap. I was ready to make him talk. At any cost. Yes. [*Gertrude, with a strangled cry, goes into the bow-window.*] But I didn't do it for fun, Kate. [*Goes to the table.*] To save my own chaps from getting pounded to pieces. I was right.

He's got no business coming into my dreams. I was right. I'll say that to you, Kate, just as I'll say it to Almighty God.

KATHERINE. Oh, the long way you've come, since you stood together, you three big, kind men we were so proud of, here in this very room, fussing over a little hurt beast. The Woodsy Boy came through that door. The boy you —

ROBERT [*sitting down opposite her*]. The conscript you saw me shoot? That was mutiny in the ranks. I was right, under the rules of war.

KATHERINE. Only two years ago that was, only two years. It was the day that Roland — Don't you remember? He asked me about the picture of Moloch.

[*Very faint, but continuously swelling louder, is heard outside at the right the music of the March-out, heard in Act I.*]

GERTRUDE. What's that?

LYDIA. It can't be the March-out that I hear!

[*Thomas, wildly excited, darts in at the terrace door.*]

THOMAS. O Aunt Katherine! The soldiers are leaving the camp. They'll march right by our house.

[*Thomas darts out again.*]

LYDIA. I can't live through it again. Oh, I'm too old!

BASIL. Why don't you throw flowers, Trudie?

[*Gertrude, with a hysteric cry, sinks upon the floor in the bow-window.*]

KATHERINE. And we thought the war was ended.

ROBERT. Thought the war was over, did you? Not a bit of it. As long as men are men, there'll be fighting.

LYDIA. We can't bear any more.

KATHERINE. We've nothing left to give.

ROBERT. Stop crying! There's an ocean of tears been shed already — an ocean of blood. Doesn't make any difference. We're fighting still. No end to it.

God's a joke. Got any brandy in the house, Kate? I'm dead tired. I'm down and out. [*Rests his head on his arms upon the table.*]

THOMAS [*running past the terrace door*]. Oh, the soldiers! The soldiers! The soldiers!

KATHERINE. Moloch is hungry still.

BASIL. And I can't go with 'em! [*Collapses, sobbing.*]

KATHERINE. More of them — more of them — more of them!

ROBERT. If they'd only stop that damned noise!

KATHERINE. Marching — marching — marching —

[*The March-out is at its fortissimo.*]

CURTAIN

THE END

MAY 7 1919